SKETCHES

OF

PERSIA,

FROM THE

JOURNALS OF A TRAVELLER IN THE EAST

IN TWO VOLUMES
VOL II

A NEW EDITION

LONDON
JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE-STREET

MDCCCXXVIII

LONDON
PRINTED BY THOMAS DAVISON, WHITEFRIARS

CONTENTS

OF

VOL. II

SKETCHES OF PERSIA.

CHAPTER XIV.

CASHAN—SCORPIONS—CASHANEE YOUTH—VILLAGE OF SINSIN—PLUNDERING EXPEDITIONS OF THE TURKUMANS—ACCOUNT OF THAT TRIBE—WANDERING TRIBES—VISIT TO THE DWELLING OF MIHRAB KHAN AFSHAR—ACCOUNT OF HIS FAMILY AND ADHERENTS—ANECDOTE OF KERREEM KHAN.

CASHAN, to which we went from Nethenz, is situated on the verge of a desert, and no city can present a more uninviting aspect. We were, however, accommodated in the Bâgh-e-Fin, an excellent house and garden, through which there is a clear stream, which, while it refreshes the latter, gives an ample supply of water to the marble-baths belonging to the small but delightful royal residence.

"May you be stung by a scorpion of Cashan," is a common malediction in Persia, and all are agreed that this city is famous for producing the

largest and most venomous species of this reptile. We were however assured, that, partaking of that spirit of hospitality which distinguishes the Persian nation, they never sting a stranger.

"This fact," said Agar Meer to me, "is asserted by Ameen Râzee, a respectable writer, and the author of a famous work called the Heft Akleem, or 'Seven Climates.'" "The same respectable writer," said Khan Sâhib, "compares the mud houses and narrow streets of Cashan, to the angelic cheeks of the resplendent Hoorees of Paradise, whose smiles are promised to the faithful. I could almost wish," he added, "to be stung by one of his scorpions, that my mind might be satisfied there was no truth in his comparison; otherwise my dreams of futurity will never be realised."

Aga Meer, who disliked wit when it ridiculed religion, gravely replied to this sally, "Ameen Râzee's facts may be correct, though his metaphors are extravagant." "That may be true," said my Hindustânnee friend, Mahomed Hoosein, "but, according to the fable of the scorpion and tortoise, the former has no power over his nature."

"I have read," said the good Moonshee,

"that a tortoise and a scorpion travelled the same road for a considerable distance in good fellowship. The latter, on the ground of this new friendship, asked the former to carry him over a deep stream. The tortoise complied; but what was his surprise to find his companion endeavouring with all his might to sting him! When he had placed him safe on the opposite shore, he turned to him and said, 'Are not you the most wicked and ungrateful of reptiles? But for me you must either have given up your journey, or have been drowned in that stream, and what is my reward? If it had not been for the armour which God has given me, I should have been stung to death.' 'Blame me not,' said the scorpion, in a supplicatory tone, 'it is not my fault; it is that of my nature; it is a constitutional * habit I have of stinging!'" "Now," said Mahomed Hoosein, not wishing to offend his brother of the pen, "this fable certainly applies to scorpions in general; those of Cashan may be different: they may have that regard for strangers which Aga Meer has stated them to have, on the authority of Ameen

* Neeyet-e-naish zedden

Râzee." "It may * be so," I remarked; and this phrase of doubtful assent put an end (as in Persia it is always meant to do) to all further discussion on the subject.

We left Cashan without any of our party being stung, which is a negative proof in favour of Ameen Râzee and other authors who have eulogized its scorpions, but the point cannot yet be considered as determined. It will no doubt therefore continue to receive, as it has hitherto, the attention of all travellers who possess learning, and are curious in their research after facts of natural history.

The inhabitants of Cashan, like those of Isfahan, are more celebrated as silk weavers than warriors. When Nadir Shah returned from India he published a proclamation, permitting the followers of his army to return to their homes. It is narrated that thirty thousand of those who belonged to Cashan and Isfahan applied to this monarch for a guard of a hundred musketeers to escort them safe to their wives and children. "Cowards!" exclaimed he, in a fury; "would I were a robber again for the sake of way-laying and plundering you all. Is

* Boodeh-bâshed.

not my success a miracle," said he to those around him, "with such a set of dastards in my camp!"

This story and many others were told us as we were sitting in one of the cool rooms of the palace of Fin, commenting on the qualities of the Câshânees.

My old friend Mahomed Shereef Khan Burgshattee told me he had once a convincing proof that a Câshânee might be a brave man. "On returning," said he, "from the pursuit of a small party of plundering Tûrkûmâns, I found that ten of my men had surrounded a fine looking youth, who was on a dry spot in a morass, where not more than two could approach him at a time. He had only a sword and a spear, but refused to yield; inviting his opponents to use their fire-arms, since they durst not fight him on equal terms. Struck with his appearance and courage, I solicited him to surrender, and assured him he should be well treated. 'I know better,' said he, 'than to regard the promises of a faithless Persian, who the moment I was unarmed would maltreat and murder me.' I ordered my men to withdraw to a distance, and

after making a vow he should be well used, and leaving my arms on the ground, I rode forward, saying, 'I will confide in you, though you dare not trust me.' The youth, subdued by this action, sprung from his horse, threw down his spear and swórd, and hastened to kiss my stirrup; offering at the same time his services, which I accepted.

"I desired him to remount," continued Mahomed Shereef Khan, "and we rejoined my astonished followers. After complimenting him on his courage, I asked where he was born? 'At Cashan,' he said. 'You a Câshânee!' I replied with surprise. 'I am,' said he, 'my father was a silk weaver, and I had just begun to learn his business, being about twelve years of age, when having gone with some companions to amuse ourselves at a distance from the town, we were surprised and carried off by a party of Tûrkûmans. I was adopted into the family of one of their chiefs, who carefully instructed me in horsemanship and the use of arms. I have ever since accompanied him in his plundering incursions into Persia and other countries.'

"Now," said the old Mehmandar, "this

man continued twenty years with me; he only died about a twelvemonth ago, and maintained till the day of his death the character he had established at our first meeting. This example," he concluded, "satisfies me that it is possible the son of a weaver, if properly brought up, may be a brave man. Nevertheless, there can be no doubt these silk manufactories give bad habits, and spoil many a good soldier."

Our first march from Cashan was to the câravânserâi of Sinsin. We found the village, which had been very flourishing thirty years ago, a complete ruin, with only a few inhabitants. Amongst these was an old man, who gave me an account of the incursions of parties of savage Tûrkûmâns, who year after year laid waste their fields, plundered their dwellings, and carried their wives and children into slavery.

I asked him if no means had been taken to prevent these inroads. "Alas!" said he, "our own country, at the period of which I speak, was in too distracted a state to admit of any such precautions, and we were too weak to defend ourselves against such daring and ferocious

men. Besides, they came and vanished in a moment. Thirty or forty mounted robbers and twenty led horses used to surprise us at daylight: all the spoil they could carry, together with women and children, were fastened on the led horses, and in an hour or two they were in full march to their homes, on the eastern shores of the Caspian Sea.

"If we attempted resistance," continued the narrator of this sad tale, "as we sometimes did, they became furious; our houses were burnt, the old and helpless massacred, and all the property they could not bear away was destroyed. Look here," said he, pointing to some scars, "look at these; I got them in attempting to save my little brother and two sisters from the merciless grasp of these ruthless spoilers. I was left for dead, while my poor father, who was wounded also, had only sufficient life left to reach Cashan, where he expired, after giving intelligence of our fate. Some horsemen were sent in pursuit, but their pampered animals, kept to parade in squares and market-places, could never overtake the trained horses of the plunderers, who used to

come two hundred fersekhs* and return in ten days.

"But, thank God," he concluded, "if the Kajirs who now fill the throne of Persia have done us no other good, it is no slight blessing to be freed from the ravages of these terrible Yamoots; that is the name of the tribe who made the inroads upon us. They dwell in the plains near Astrabad, and are friends of our royal family, who are natives of that place: besides, now that Persia is settled, they find there is more profit, and less danger, in breeding and selling horses, than in plundering and murdering their neighbours."

I had ten years before seen a good deal of some Tûrkûmâns at Teheran. Their character, and what I learnt of their habits, quite prepared me to believe the melancholy tale which was told me by the old villager, towards whom I showed a sympathy that surprised him; for scenes like these are so common in Persia, that they attract little attention. The fact is,

* The standard fersekh of Persia is 6000 royal yards (gez-e-shâh), which is somewhat more than three miles and a half This measure, however, varies in different provinces of that kingdom

the Tûrkûmâns are only a shade more savage than those tribes of Persian and Tartar origin, who form the military class of this nation, and who, though restrained in some degree of order, when the government is strong, cherish their lawless habits, and are ready at a moment to show them, when invited to do so, by the weakness or distraction of the state.

The Tûrkûmâns * have long been familiar to Persian history as depredators. This race of Tartars has small eyes, high cheek bones, thin beards, and robust frames. The women, though with softer features, and some with good complexions, are seldom beauties; and they are generally more valued for their capability of enduring fatigue, and for giving birth to, and bringing up stout children, than for any of those charms and accomplishments which are so highly prized in more civilized society.

* Many Persian authors assert that the word Tûrkûmân is from the compound term Tûrk-mânend, or Turk-like, and the conclusion made from this is, that they are a tribe of Tartars, who having become inhabitants of the north-eastern part of Persia, were subsequently designated by a name which marked their origin Persian writers, however, are generally bad etymologists, and I am a worse; I must therefore leave this important question in doubt

During the last century the limits of Persia have been more confined than formerly, and these Tûrkûmân tribes may now be considered more as borderers to that country than as forming part of its population. They appear indeed to have cultivated and fostered all the qualities which might be expected to belong to a race so situated, and have become, in virtue of usage, entitled alternately to claim the privilege of being protected by, or the right of plundering, the kingdoms they divide.

The Tûrkûmâns trace their descent to the great Moghul monarch Aghooz Khan, the son of Kara Khan, the son of Moghul Khan, the son of the Lord knows who. Their great progenitor was famous for his five sons, his bow, and his three golden arrows! At his death he divided the bow, which is the type of power, between the two elder, to whom he consigned his great empire To each of the three younger he gave an arrow, signifying by that bequest that they and their descendants were to obey their elder brethren, to be chiefs, generals, and embassadors, and to fly at command, as an arrow when directed from the bow. The Tûrkûmâns belong to one of the junior branches of this

great family, but they have not hitherto been remarkable for any of the dispositions or qualities likely to render them useful or obedient servants.

I had the account of their origin, as well as many other facts connected with their history, from an old Tûrkûmân called Rahmân Beg, of whom I bought some horses. A short anecdote will give his character. I was anxious to buy a very fine animal he had, but I delayed the purchase from an objection to his head, which was large and ugly. One day as I was commenting on this unsightly member, my friend lost all patience, "What the devil," said he, "do they ride on the head of a horse in your country, that you are so particular as to its size and beauty?"

This rude, but intelligent barbarian, though he could neither read nor write, and had the utmost contempt for Moollâhs (a term which, with him, included all priests and scholars), was as familiar with the history of his own tribe as Mirkhond, or any of the best Eastern historians.

"You have, no doubt," said he to me, "read of the famous Seljûkian Prince Sanjar. That sovereign, not content with an annual tribute of

twenty-four thousand sheep which we gave him, wanted to increase the number, and to send one of his own officers to choose from our flocks, instead of trusting to the honour of our chiefs. This we could never put up with; so we fought him, destroyed his army, and took him prisoner. He was for some years set upon a throne every day, and confined in a cage every night; but at last he made his escape, and being a soft-hearted, foolish blockhead, died of grief, from seeing the state of desolation to which we had reduced his favourite province of Khorassan! After this," continued he, "we became the terror of the world, and the name of Tûrkûmân, which had long been despised, was dreaded everywhere. Who has not heard," said he exultingly, "of our princes and chiefs who subdued kingdoms, and plundered empires, under the glorious banners of the white and the black sheep? But these days of sovereignty did not last long; we separated, and have never since done any thing worthy of mention. The tribe of Yamoot," continued my old friend, "to which I belong, remained long unsubdued, and made famous annual inroads into Persia; but the late king, Aga Mahomed Khan, who was a

cruel, wily, old rogue, spoiled all that sport. Being well acquainted with our haunts, he made a sudden incursion into our country, slew numbers, and brought away many captives, the majority of whom were women and children."

"The possession of our families," said Rahmân Beg, as he concluded this short history of his tribe, "compelled our chiefs to enter into a compact not to plunder, and they have been obliged to give their children as hostages for its faithful performance. The present king has improved upon the policy of his uncle; a colony of our tribe is established at Teheran; some are in service, and the others, though strictly watched, are permitted to trade. If matters go on in this way our sons will become a set of blackguard horsedealers instead of gallant warriors, and their children will be instructed in the art of cheating unwary citizens, instead of the more manly occupation of plundering a rich traveller. We shall have no more fine Persian girls to keep our tents clean, and dress our victuals, nor active fellows to rub our horses, or attend our flocks! What a sad change! And as to our profits in breeding and selling horses, I have known more money given in one day for the

ransom of a nobleman or a wealthy merchant, than our whole tribe can now make by trafficking in cattle for a twelvemonth!"

I asked Rahmân Beg, how he, as a Mahomedan, could reconcile himself to make slaves of persons of the same religion? "What," said he, "do you count these rascally Sheâhs, the Persians, who deny the first four Caliphs, to be of the same religion as we Soonees?—they are vile schismatics" "Then," I observed, "when you made Soonees captives, you did not make them slaves?" "Why! I don't know, I think," he added, laughing, "we should in such case have been compelled to become Sheâhs ourselves; for slaves we must have."

The Tûrkûmâns, of whom Rahmân Beg is a fair specimen, pay little if any regard to religion beyond a few ceremonies. The rites observed at their births, funerals, and marriages, are not essentially different from those of the other wandering tribes in Persia. The courage of this tribe is proverbial, and both the Persians and Afghâns admit their extraordinary prowess. They use bows and arrows, and some few have fire-arms, but the weapon on which they place most dependence is the spear. This is in ge-

neral from ten to twelve feet long, rudely formed, and with a short piece of steel at the point.

As we were one day looking at a party of the king's guards *, each of whom was armed with a sword, a spear, a pair of pistols, and a dagger, Rahmân Beg tossed up his head in contempt, exclaiming, "What is the good † of all that arsenal? what can a soldier want beyond a spear and a heart?"

The Tûrkûmâns are fond of music and dancing. The celebrated song of "Koor Ogloo," or The Son of the Blind Man, is chanted when they go to battle, and is said to have a wonderful effect in exciting the courage of this rude race. I asked Rahmân Beg to give me a copy of this song, he could not, but gave me its general purport, and repeated some lines with great animation.

The burthen of the song is the wonderful deeds of the son of a poor blind old man, who employed himself in plundering travellers and caravans, while his father dwelt in the recesses of a wood which lay between two great cities.

* Gholam-e-Shâh

† Een kârkhâneh cheh fâideh berâe sipâhee cheh zeroor sewâe neezeh wa dil?

The prowess of the single arm of the "Son of the blind man" was so great, that hundreds could not withstand it; and when thousands were sent against him, his fleet horse Kerât carried him to a place of security.

The praises of the hero and his horse, the prodigies of valour of the one, the wonderful fleetness of the other, with the descriptions of rich plunder, and beautiful damsels, which abound throughout this song, are quite congenial to the habits of a Tûrkûmân; and I could believe all the feelings, that I was told its recitation produced, from the effect the mere account of it that he gave me had on Rahmân Beg "Others of the Tartar blood," said my old friend, "admire this fine composition, but a set of fellows who live as they do, are not worthy of such verses; and we also," he added, "if we go on as we are now doing, shall soon be ashamed to hear them sung by our minstrels, who may well cherish these old strains, for we no longer supply them with deeds for new songs of battle!"

I was very anxious to learn all I could of the breed and management of the Tûrkûmân horses, which are so highly valued in Persia. They are

of good size, being from fifteen to sixteen hands high, of excellent temper, and of a shape, like that of the highest bred English carriage-horses, lengthy and strong limbed; and often showing a great deal of blood.

The Tûrkûmâns trace all their best horses to Arabian sires; and they believe that the race degenerates, after three or four descents, unless it is, what they term, "refreshed." This makes them most anxious to obtain fine Arabian horses. Rahmân Beg and his brother offered the Elchee a large sum for a very fine animal he had brought from Abusheher, and they seemed greatly disappointed that he would not part with him.

The size of the horses is attributed to the fine pasture lands on which they are reared; and the extraordinary capability of bearing fatigue to their blood, and the manner in which they are trained. They ride them with snaffles, and allow them to go slouching along with their necks loose. They speak with contempt of horsemen who rein up their horses, and throw them on their haunches "It is taking the animal," said Rahmân Beg to me, "off his natural position; and for what? to get a little

readiness* in the plain; and for this power of skirmishing, you hurt, if you do not altogether lose, the long walk, trot, and gallop, to which we trust in our forays† !"

These plunderers train their horses, as much as we do our racers or hunters. Before they begin their expeditions, they put them into complete condition, and the marches they perform are astonishing. According to their own accounts, some have gone forty fersekhs (140 miles) within twenty-four hours; and it was ascertained on most minute inquiry, that parties of them, in their predatory inroads, were in the habit of marching from twenty to thirty fersekhs (from 70 to 105 miles) for twelve or fifteen days together, without a halt.

Before proceeding on a foray they knead a number of small hard balls of barley-meal, which, when wanted, they soak in water, and this serves as food to both themselves and their horses. It is a frequent practice with them in crossing deserts, where no water is to be found, to open a vein in the shoulder of the horse, and to drink a little of his blood; which, according to

* Házir mydánee. † Chappau.

their opinion, benefits, rather than injures the animal, while it refreshes the rider. On my appearing to doubt this fact, Rahmân Beg showed me several old horses, on which there were numerous marks of having been bled, and he assured me they never had recourse to phlebotomy but on such occasions as have been stated.

The Eelyâts, or wandering tribes in Persia, are like the Tûrkûmâns, but somewhat less barbarous. They have been often described, and one good picture of this race serves for all, for they are little subject to change; and while every tradition and every work on the ancient history of Persia proves that many of its more southern inhabitants, particularly those of the mountains of Kerman and Lauristan, have been Nomades or wandering tribes from time immemorial, we find in the Turkish Eelyâts who have overrun the northern provinces, the language, the habits, and the appearance of the Tartar race to which they belong.

The qualities most prized amongst these tribes are courage in men, and chastity in women. The females who dwell in tents wear no veils. They welcome strangers, are very

hospitable, and their manner, though confident, is by no means immodest. The Elchee on his return from the first mission, when riding one day near a small encampment of Afshâr families, expressed doubts to his mehmandar, a Persian nobleman, as to the reported boldness and skill in horsemanship of their females. The mehmandar immediately called to a young woman of handsome appearance, and asked her in Turkish if she was a soldier's daughter? She said she was. "And you expect to be a mother of soldiers," was the next observation. She smiled. "Mount that horse," said he, pointing to one with a bridle but without a saddle, "and show this European Elchee the difference between a girl of a tribe and a citizen's daughter." She instantly sprung upon the animal, and setting off at full speed did not stop till she had reached the summit of a small hill in the vicinity, which was covered with loose stones When there, she waved her hand over her head, and came down the hill at the same rate at which she had ascended it. Nothing could be more dangerous than the ground over which she galloped; but she appeared quite fearless, and seemed delighted at having had an oppor-

tunity of vindicating the females of her tribe from the reproach of being like the ladies of cities*.

The wives and daughters of the chiefs, who accompany their relations to cities and towns, have in some degree adopted the customs of citizens; but neither such changes of manners in the ladies, nor the habits acquired by the men, are suffered to dissolve their ties with followers, whose devoted attachment and readiness to adopt their cause, or to revenge their death, constitute their strength and safeguard, amidst all the hazards with which they are surrounded.

The habits and sentiments of this class of people interested me exceedingly; and my anxiety to observe as much as I could of their domestic arrangements made me delighted on hearing that the Elchee intended a visit to the house of his mehmandar, Mihrâb Khan Afshâr, a man of high family, and who holds an office at court.

The day before we arrived at his house I met him on the march, having a letter in his hand, with the contents of which he appeared highly

* History of Persia, vol ii. p 115

offended. "I hope you have no unpleasant news," I said. "Nothing," was his reply; "except that I am directed in this mandate from his majesty's minister to be most careful in protecting the villages and grounds we have to pass, and not take a blade of grass from them. The chief of the tribe to which these lands belong," he added, in a rage, "has obtained this order. The scoundrel! But this is another item to the account which I shall some day settle with compound interest."

"You must know," said Mihrâb Khan, seeing I did not quite comprehend him, "this tribe and mine have a long-continued feud. Our lands adjoin; the government is too strong at present to admit of attacking each other openly like brave men; so we endeavour, like sneaking rascals, to do each other all the mischief we can by intrigues and plots at court. They are at present in great favour, and have recently obtained the transfer of a small tribe, whose tents you have just passed, and who were formerly our peasants." "Who are these peasants?" I asked. "Oh," said the Turkish chief, "they belong to one of the old Persian tribes, which it is the policy of the king to break, and so he

parcels them amongst us Turks; but that has nothing to do with his taking them from us, and giving them to our enemies."

During this conversation we had reached the summit of an eminence, from which Mihrâb Khan, his eyes glistening with joy, pointed out the ruins of a village "Look there," said he, "it is twenty-five years since I accompanied my uncle Hâshem Khan to an attack of that village, we completely sacked and destroyed it. The rascals had no Shâhin-Shâh (king of kings) to protect them then. But there is one consolation, these stupid times cannot last for ever, and if I live long enough to give these vagabonds another sound drubbing, I shall die contented!"

The morning after this conversation, we arrived at the fort of Hashem*, a name given to this castle, after the founder, the uncle of our mehmandar. We were met by four nephews of the latter, several of his relations, a troop of his followers, and his little son Shâhverdee, who though only eight years of age, paid his compliments to the Elchee in a most formal style, and managed with great address a large and spirited horse.

* Kella-e-Hashem Khan.

When we entered the fort, we found it completely dismantled, and two of the bastions thrown down. This was done, we were informed, by the jealousy of the king, who disapproved of his nobles having strongholds.

We had no sooner finished a very plentiful breakfast, than our host retired to his inner apartment, and returned, leading in his hand a stout, chubby, red-cheeked boy, between three and four years of age. Of this little fellow, he seemed very proud; there could not be a finer child: he, also, was well trained, and made his obeisance to the Elchee, like a high bred young gentleman, and took his seat near his father. We however managed, though not without some difficulty, to discompose his gravity, and soon discovered, that he was, as his father had described him, a proper Young Pickle.

In introducing me to his relations Mihrâb Khan gave me a short history of his family. "My father," said he, "had two brothers, one older, and one younger than himself. Here (pointing to them) are four young men, the grandsons of my eldest uncle, who was head of the family. Their eldest brother is with the king, commanding a body of horse, all of the

tribe of Afshâr, and this (turning to an elderly person) is my cousin, the son of my younger uncle.

"My family," said the Khan, "consists of six children, of whom you have seen two: they are all (except one) by the same mother, my wife, the daughter of Fatteh Ali Khan Afshâr, a famous chief, who, on the death of Nadir Shah (whom you know was of our tribe) aspired to the throne. My good father-in-law, however, lost his life in the attempt to become a king, and I married his orphan daughter, an excellent woman, but who carries her head rather high, as no doubt she has a right to do, from recollection of her father's pretensions! Look," said he, speaking softly, for the apartment we were in was within hearing of the interior; "look at that youngster, at the other end of the room: he is my son. His mother was the daughter of a jeweller at Isfahan, an uncommonly pretty girl. He is a fine lad, but I dare hardly notice him, and he is, you will observe, not allowed to sit within ten yards of the grandsons of Fatteh Ali Khan Afshâr! This is all very proper," he added; "it is attention to the dam, as well as the sire, that

keeps the breed good. Besides, the influence of females amongst us Eelyâts is very great, and if we did not treat them with respect, matters would not long be right."

Mihrâb Khan next gave me an account of the mode in which their family lands were allotted, and how the disbursements of the respective branches of the family were made. "My father and his brothers lived together," said he, "and we do the same. Our inheritance was equal, and each of the three branches is charged a day's expenditure, successively. Entertainments and imposts are paid in equal shares. We seek by intermarriages to strengthen those ties, which are our only defence against oppression and destruction.

"We are Turks," he concluded, laughing, "and consequently, you may suppose, have often violent quarrels, but the necessity of our condition soon reconciles us again; and we are at present, and will I trust long continue, an united family!"

I remarked in the followers of Mihrâb Khan, as I had done in other tribes, an attachment to their chief approaching to a perfect devotion. It was a love and duty, of inheritance,

strengthened by the feelings of twenty generations. Though the superior in general repaid this feeling with regard and protection, I saw many instances of its being considered as much a property as the land, and the inanimate goods and chattels, which he who received it had inherited from his father.

There are few countries which can boast of more examples of devoted allegiance of chiefs to their sovereign, as well as of followers to their chiefs, than Persia: but this will not recommend them to many of my readers. We live in a refined and artificial age, and, vain of our condition, we laugh to scorn feelings which were the pride of our ancestors, and which at this moment form the only ties that preserve order over nine-tenths of the universe.

Allegiance of any description is, according to some philosophers, a folly if not a crime, and quite beneath the dignity of human beings. Others admit that from being a cherished prejudice, it may in some cases have a salutary action; but those who view man as formed by his Creator, and who contemplate the origin of those motives by which he is actuated, will find that the feeling of dependence with which al-

legiance is associated, and which in the silence of reason often leads to a line of action beneficial to the community as well as the individual, is not the less valuable from being grafted on his weakness, a part of his nature, by the by, requiring much more the care and attention of philosophers than his strength, for that can take care of itself.

Allegiance is the duty a child owes to its parent, for birth, nourishment, and protection. It is that which collected families owe to a chief of their tribe, who is their point of union, and consequently of their security, and in its climax it is that which chiefs and their followers owe to a sovereign, their concentrated attachment to whom is the ground of their safety and their glory as a nation. This feeling gains strength by becoming hereditary. It is associated with the fame of individuals, of families, of tribes, and of empires; it is conservative, it is destructive; but even in its most dreadful action it has in it an ennobling principle, for it is congenial with the most natural, as well as the highest and noblest feelings of the human mind

The wandering tribes in Persia are not more remarkable for attachment to their chiefs than

for the affection relations bear to each other, and the strength of those ties by which every individual is bound to the community of which he is a part.

A Persian friend of mine related to me in illustration of this fact, an authentic and affecting anecdote of the conduct of an old man of one of those tribes during the reign of Kerreem Khan Zend.

Twelve men had been robbed and murdered under the walls of Shiraz The perpetrators of this atrocious act could not for a long period be discovered, but Kerreem Khan deeming this occurrence so deeply injurious to that impression of security and justice which it was the labour of his life to establish, commanded the officers of justice to persevere in their search till the offenders were detected, threatening them and others who had heard the cries of the murdered men with vengeance, unless they effected a discovery, which he considered essential to his own reputation.

After some months had elapsed, it was discovered by accident that a small branch of Kerreem Khan's own tribe of Zend, at that time encamped near Shiraz, were the murderers.

Their guilt was clearly proved, and all who had been actually engaged in the murder were sentenced to death. Powerful intercession was made that some at least should be pardoned, but the prince had vowed that every man should suffer, and their being of his own favoured tribe made him more inexorable. They had, he said, brought disgrace on him as their sovereign and as their chief, and could not be forgiven.

When the prisoners were brought before him to receive sentence, there was amongst them a youth of twenty years of age, whose appearance interested every spectator, but their anxiety was increased to pain when they saw the father of this young man rush forward, and demand, before they proceeded to the execution, to speak to the prince. Permission was granted, and he addressed him as follows:

"Kerreem Khan, you have sworn that these guilty men shall die, and it is just, but I, who am not guilty, come here to demand a boon of my chief. My son is young, he has been deluded into crime; his life is forfeited, but he has hardly tasted the sweets of life; he is just betrothed in marriage; I come to die in his stead. be merciful! let an old worn out man

perish, and spare a youth, who may long be useful to his tribe; let him live to drink of the waters, and till the ground of his ancestors!"

Kerreem Khan is stated to have been greatly moved by the old man's appeal: he could not pardon the offence, having sworn on the Koran that all concerned should be put to death, and with feelings very different from our ideas of justice, but congenial to those of the chief of a tribe, he granted the father's prayer, and the old man went exultingly to meet his fate. While all around were filled with pity, his son, wild and distracted with grief, was loud in imploring the prince to reverse his decree, to inflict on him that death which he merited, and to save the more valuable life of his aged, devoted, and innocent parent.

CHAPTER XV

ARRIVAL AT KOOM—MAHOMEDAN LADIES—THEIR RIGHTS AND PRIVILEGES AFTER MARRIAGE—DIVORCES—STORY OF HAJEE SALAH THE CROSS-GRAINED

We went from Cashan to Koom, a very ancient and once populous city, but the greater part of it is now in ruins. Several of the Seffavean monarchs, and many celebrated and pious persons, are interred at this place, but notwithstanding the tombs of learned priests and great monarchs, with which it is honoured, its present fame and sanctity are chiefly derived from its containing the mortal remains of Fatima * the Immaculate, who was the sister of the Imâm Mehdee.

The city of Koom was given sometime ago by the king as an estate to his mother, a pious liberal old lady, who expended considerable sums in restoring it to prosperity. She bestowed

* Fatima-ool-Masoomah

especial care in ornamenting the shrine of the female saint, the dome of which being gilt has a splendid appearance. This is a sanctuary even for murderers

Whatever ignorant Europeans may say of the exclusion of females from the Mahomedan Paradise, the ladies who profess that religion have the consolation to know, that not only in this instance, but that of Fatima, the daughter of the Prophet, and in many others, they receive a homage which proves their title to the adoration of man, as saints in heaven, as well as angels upon earth

I have had frequent discussions with my Persian friends upon the general condition of the female sex in this country, and cannot better illustrate the subject than by relating what passed on an occasion when I made a violent attack on their usages in this particular, and brought them into strong contrast with those of the civilized nations of Europe.

I began by stating, that by making slaves of one half of the creation they made tyrants of the other. "I am only surprised," I said, "how your females can bear the subjection and confinement to which they are doomed. How

our Christian ladies would scorn such restraints! Their minds are cultivated as carefully as those of their fathers, brothers, or husbands, who trust for their good conduct to their sense of virtue and religion, rather than to strong doors and high walls. We desire," I added, "that those who share our pleasures and our toils should be acquainted with the world in which they live, that we may possess not only an affectionate wife, but an intelligent friend

"Your Mahomedan ladies, on the contrary, are shut up like wild animals: whilst moving from one inclosure to another they travel in a curtained carriage, or, if walking, they are enveloped in robes which merely admit of their breathing and seeing their way through small eye-windows Besides, they are not allowed to have any communication but with their husbands, children, or slaves. What with flattering one, coaxing another, beating a third, and fighting a fourth, these ladies must have a fine time of it in this world; and as to the next, though they are not denied Paradise as we Europeans often erroneously believe, they are only promised, as a reward for the most pious life, half those

blessings which await the virtuous of the male part of the creation!

"Your females," I said, "are married while mere children, and the consequence is, they are old women at twenty-five. This furnishes you with an excuse for forming other connexions, and treating your first wives with neglect."

This attack was listened to with symptoms of impatience, every one seemed anxious to answer, but precedence was given to Jaffier Ali Khan, and the ladies of his country could not have had a better advocate.

"Really, sir, you form a very erroneous judgment of the condition of our women. In this, as in many other instances, where our religion or our customs are concerned, vulgar errors pass from one to another till they are believed by all. Many persons in England imagine that a pigeon was taught to pick peas from the ears of the Prophet, who thought he might succeed by this device in persuading the ignorant that the pigeon was a celestial messenger. They also say that his tomb at Mecca is supported between heaven and earth by means of a loadstone. If true, it would be a miracle; but it is not true:

nevertheless, people believe it, and the more readily, because it is wonderful Now," said Jaffier, "it is the same with half the stories about our women. Why, I am told, it is a common belief with you that Mahomed has declared women have no souls! If you read the Koran you will find that our Prophet not only ranks women with men as true believers, but particularly ordains that they shall be well treated and respected by their husbands, he has indeed secured that by establishing their right to dowers as well as to claims of inheritance He also has put it out of the power of a husband to hurt the reputation of his wife, unless he can produce four witnesses of her guilt, and should he have witnessed that himself, he must swear four times to the fact, and then by a fifth oath imprecate the wrath of God if he is a liar. Even after this, if the wife goes through the same ceremony, and imprecates the wrath of God upon her head if her husband does not swear falsely, her punishment is averted; or if she is divorced, her whole dower must be paid to her, though it involve the husband in ruin. What protection can be more effectual than this?

"Then a woman who is divorced may marry again after four months, which is believed to be soon enough. These widows, I assure you, sir, when they have a good dower, are remarkable for consulting their own judgment as to a second choice, they are not like young giddy girls, who are guided by their parents or the reports of old nurses or match-makers."

"But how do they see or hear," said I, "sufficient to direct them in their choice?"

"Why," said Jaffier Ali, "they see and hear much more than you imagine. Besides the liberty they enjoy of going abroad, some of the rooms in the merdâneh, or man's apartments, are only divided by a curtain or skreen from the zenâneh, or female apartment, and the ladies can, when they choose, both see and hear through that as much as they desire"

"But what is the use of those peeps and chance meetings to your young ladies, if they have not the liberty of choice with regard to their husbands?"

"Why, sir," said my friend, "our daughters are usually betrothed when children, and married when very young; the husband is commonly selected from equality of condition and

age. All this is settled by the parents, whose regard for their children, it is supposed, will make them take every means to promote their happiness It must be confessed, however, that worldly motives often lead to youth and age being united, but this, I am told, occurs even in England. You will say an English father cannot force his daughter to marry, but he can no doubt use such means as may oblige her to marry a man for whom she has an aversion, or she may run away from her parents with some person of whom they disapprove

"So you see," said Jaffier, "this liberty of choice which your forward, though inexperienced, young ladies exercise, has bad as well as good effects. Now our daughters never run away, and as they have seldom ever seen their destined husbands, if they have no love for them, neither have they any dislike The change from the condition of a girl under the strict subjection of her mother to that of a wife at the head of her own part of the household is so agreeable, that they are too happy to adopt it

"You English take your ideas of the situation of females in Asia from what you hear and read of the harems of kings, rulers, and chiefs, who

being absolute over both the men and women of their territories, indulge in a plurality of wives and mistresses. These, undoubtedly, are immured within high walls, and are kept during life like slaves, but you ought to recollect, that the great and powerful, who have such establishments, are not in the proportion of one to ten thousand of the population of the country If a person of inferior rank marry a woman of respectable connexions, she becomes mistress of his family; and should he have only one house, he cannot place another on an equality without a certainty of involving himself in endless trouble and vexation, if not disgrace The dower usually settled upon such a lady, added to other privileges, and an unlimited authority over her children and servants, give her much importance; and she is supported by her relations in the assertion of every right with which custom has invested her.

"With regard to liberty, such a lady can not only go to the public bath, but she visits for one or two days, as she chooses, at the house of her father, brother, sister, or son. She not only goes to all these places unattended, but her husband's following her would be deemed an

unpardonable intrusion. Then she has visitors at home; friends, musicians, and dancers; the husband cannot enter the lady's part of the house without giving notice. I only wish," said Jaffier Ali, laughing, "you could see the bold blustering gentleman of the merdâneh in the ladies' apartment, you would hardly believe him to be the same person. The moment his foot crosses the threshold, every thing reminds him he is no longer lord and master, children, servants, and slaves look alone to the lady. In short, her authority is paramount: when she is in good humour, every thing goes on well; and when in bad, nothing goes right. It is very well for grandees, who, besides power and wealth, have separate houses and establishments, and are above all regard for law and usage, to have harems, and wives, and female slaves, but for others, though they may try the experiment, it can never answer," and he shook his head, apparently with that sincere conviction which is the result of experience.

Hajee Hoosein, who had brought our evening kelliâns, and was listening to this defence of Mahomedan ladies with great attention, exclaimed at this last sentence, "Sâdee says very truly,

'Two dervises can sleep on one carpet,
But two kings cannot rest in one kingdom.' '

"Very true, Hajee," said Jaffier Ali, "nor can two mistresses be at peace in one house."

"Why, then," said I, "did your Prophet permit polygamy, and set so bad an example? for while he limited his followers to four wives, he obtained a peculiar dispensation to have nine himself, besides 'Slaves of his right hand *.'"

Meerzâ Aga Meer, who is a holy Syed, and consequently of the Prophet's family, took the word, as he is wont to do upon all occasions when he hears a name so sacred irreverently treated.

"The reasons of Mahomed (on whom be the blessing of God)," said the Meerzâ, calmly, "are inscrutable, but as far as his acts can be judged by erring mortals, or considered otherwise than as proceeding from divine authority, we may believe that in permitting polygamy, he only followed the custom of the Jews, in whose Prophet, Moses, you Christians, as well as we Musselmans, believe. The limitation to four legitimate wives was intended as a check, no doubt, upon those habits of sensual indulgence, into which not only the affluent of the Jews,

* This phrase is applied to those slaves acquired in wars with infidels.

rt the Pagan Arabs, had fallen , and it was the
ıormity of their vices which led our Prophet to
'nounce such severe punishment now and here-
ter upon those who continued to follow wicked
urses.

" There is no doubt," said Aga Meer, " that
e custom to which you have alluded, of very
rly marriages, and the effects of climate and
dentary habits, bring on a premature old age
many of our females. But after all, the num-
r who take advantage of the license to have a
ırality of wives is not near so great as you
agine. Take a thousand Persians and you
ll not find ten with more than two wives, and
t thirty with more than one. Who can afford
? The expense of a marriage, the main-
ıance of females, and, above all, the dower
ıich is required, and which remaining at the
ly's sole disposal, is independent of that inherit-
ce to which she and her children are entitled
om the remainder of the husband's property, are
ıuperable objections

" You speak," said he, addressing himself to
, " as if your pity were limited to our ladies ;
you were more intimately acquainted with
e condition of us husbands, we should have

some share of your sympathy. Jaffier Ali has already explained to you some of the rights and privileges of our ladies, which are usually supported by a host of relations, but he has not enumerated one half. We may, it is true, escape from one wife by marrying another, but if we are not rich, such a proceeding involves the giving up most of our comforts in life. What I have said applies to men of moderate means; and as to the great mass of the population who live by their labour, few can support two wives. If you have any doubts respecting the equality of condition of their partners, do but listen now and then near their houses, and you will hear a shrill and sharp voice rating the supposed lord and master in a manner which will instantly relieve your mind from any anxiety you may now feel for the rights of the softer sex in Persia."

This sally of the good Meer produced the more mirth, from its being unusual for him to depart from his gravity But resuming his serious air, he continued; "Mahomedan women have never real power until they have offspring. Mâder, or the mother, is, from the prince to the peasant, the chief object of affection and respect. On her not only domestic concerns,

but the making of marriages usually depends The care and indulgence she bestows upon her children is often in strong contrast to the neglect and harshness of the father, which deepens the impression of gratitude they entertain for her during life. This sentiment is so general, that nothing causes such complete loss of character as want of love and duty towards a mother.

"Have you studied our law," said Meerzâ Aga Meer to me, "particularly that part of it which relates to property and inheritance?" I confessed I had not given the subject that attention it merited. "I thought so," said the Meer, "or you would not have judged so lightly of the condition of our females.

"It is," said the Meer, "the possession of property, and the right of inheriting and using it, which gives respect and consequence to persons with others as well as themselves. Now you will find, both by the Koran, which is the fountain of our law, and by the commentaries, which are streams from that sacred source, that females have equal rights with males to use property; and their claim to inheritance, though somewhat smaller, as is the case in other coun-

tries, is on a scale that shows the light in which they are held by our laws and institutions."

The Meerzâ supported his argument by more quotations from the book of Mahomed, from traditions, and commentaries by learned doctors, than I shall repeat. The sum of it, however, was to this effect, that a woman who has property of her own, which includes her dower, has full command of it during her life. At her death the husband has half if there are no children, and a fourth if there are The remainder is divided among them equally, females having the same share as males

When the husband dies, his wife or wives (legally married) inherit one fourth of his property, if there are no children; if there are, the wife or wives have only one eighth · but this is always independent of the dower or settlement made at the period of marriage.

If a man leave an only daughter or granddaughter, she has the half of his estate; if two or more, they have two-thirds. If he leave a son and daughters, the son has the share of two females, besides becoming, after the shares are allotted, the heir-general or residuary legatee.

The daughters born in wedlock have their

allotted shares of inheritance, but in no case can they become heirs to any property beyond that amount, except to their manumitted slave. On the death of such a person they have a right to share as a relation, and can inherit as heirs. "The following text of the Koran is curious," said the Meer, "and merits to be quoted: 'There is not among women any heiress except her who kindly freed the enslaved neck.'"

"All you have said," I observed, "is very well. I understand the rights of your legitimate wives and daughters, but what becomes of the numerous progeny of slaves and others of the Harem?"

"What becomes of your illegitimate children in England?" replied the Meer, with more asperity than was usual to him, but my attack had roused him. "If," he continued, "the book which was written by Meerzâ Aboo Tâlib, who travelled in your country, is at all true, a great proportion of your females and their offspring are in a much more miserable and degraded state than any in our country! But perhaps," said he, in a milder tone, "Aboo Tâlib has exaggerated, which travellers are in the habit of doing."

I made no answer, for I thought of the parable of the "mote and the beam," and turned the conversation from this part of the subject by asking whether a man or woman could not bequeath their property. "I am no Moollâh," said Aga Meer, "to give a precise answer to such a question; but I know this, they can bestow it during life, and I believe that though, according to the strict interpretation of the Koran, pious or charitable bequests are alone legal, others are attended to by the judges when not very injurious or improper I conclude this is the case, by my knowledge that wills are frequently made, but I am," he repeated, "no Moollâh."

"That you are not a Moollâh, I am very glad," said Jaffier Ali, "for I never can understand these doctors of our law, they have always so many reasons to state on both sides of every question, that they quite confuse me, and I really believe that wise and learned as they are, they often confuse themselves"—"There is nothing, I can assure you, sir," said Jaffier Ali to me, "that these Moollâhs like better than advocating the cause of our ladies, who, what with their aid, and that of other supporters, as well as their

own spirit, have, I think, more than an equal share of power and authority."

"But why," said I, "if they have this power, and such rights of property, are they cooped up, and never allowed to stir abroad without veils? with such usages how can they attain that knowledge of the world which is necessary to enable them to perform their duties?"

"As to cooping up," said Aga Meer, who here resumed the contest, "Jaffier Ali has already explained the indulgences they have, in going abroad, and seeing their friends at home; and with respect to wearing veils, what you deem a punishment they consider a distinction, and look down with pity on the women of the Eelyât tribes and others, who do not follow this custom.

"I do not exactly know," said he, "what you mean by a knowledge of the world; nor do I distinctly understand the benefits you expect them to derive from such knowledge. We," he added, smiling, "consider that loving and obeying their husbands, giving proper attention to their children, and their domestic duties, are the best occupations for females."

"That is," I replied, "your females are either

the slaves of your pleasures, or drudges to perform the work of your house. This is their lot in the present world, and in the next, though you do not exclude them from heaven, you only allow, even to the most virtuous, as I said before, half the joys which are destined for a good man. They are in fact neither treated nor instructed in a manner that can elevate them to the rank which God meant them to hold, as the companions and friends of man, and, in the condition in which your laws and usages place them, they never can have that respect for themselves, nor receive it from others, which is essential to form a civilized community."

"But," said the Meer, "we are not a civilized community, such as you allude to; some of our ladies, whose husbands or fathers are learned men, have considerable knowledge, and many of these have received an excellent education." "This," said I, "is a fact of which I am aware; my friend Jaffier Ali, who married the daughter of a physician, informed me how well the mind of his consort had been cultivated by her wise and pious father, and I have seen a small volume of poems, copied by her, which he means to present to the Elchee; but I consider

her, and some others with similar endowments, as exceptions to the general rule."

"Very fortunately," replied Aga Meer, "they are exceptions: if the majority of our females were so well instructed, they would be far before their fathers and husbands, and that would never do. Changes must begin with the men, or we shall have all in confusion.

"With respect to the difference of rewards and punishments between the male and female sex, it has been considered," said the Meer, "that as the latter have not the same opportunities of acquiring knowledge, their responsibility should be less, and it is decreed that they shall only receive for any crime half the punishment that would be inflicted upon a man. The same principle, in reference to their good actions, has led to their being only deemed entitled to half the enjoyment that a man can attain in the next world. But this is a point," said the Meer, "that I do not well comprehend. It has puzzled many of our wisest Moolláhs, and volumes upon volumes of contradictory opinions have been written by the expounders of the Koran, upon the duties, rewards, and punishments of women here and hereafter;

God alone knows who is right and who is wrong."

"I know as little as you or the Moollâhs either," said Jaffier Ali, "of what will be the lot of our ladies in the next world, but I am positive they enjoy plenty of power in this Really, my good friend," said he, addressing me, "if you could get a peep behind the curtain, you would find that from the palace of the king to the hut of the peasant, some personage, either in the shape of a wife or a mother, secretly or openly rules the whole household, the master not excepted. Some men, in the hope of preserving their authority, marry a woman of low connexions, or a slave, who cannot claim a dower. Such wives, being pennyless and unsupported by relations, will, they expect, continue mild and submissive, and neither give themselves airs nor leave the house in a pet. These wary gentlemen, however, are often disappointed, for if the partners they select are handsome and beloved, they too become tyrants and tormentors"

"That may be," said Mahomed Hoosein Khan, who had hitherto listened to our discussion with much more patience than I had expected, "but in such a case a man becomes

a slave of his own passions, which is far better than selling himself, as many do, to be the slave of those of an arrogant woman, who, from superior birth or great wealth, considers herself as the ruler of him she has condescended to espouse."

Hajee Hoosein, on hearing this remark, eagerly exclaimed, "How exactly that was the case with Sâdee! 'My termagant of a wife,' (said that wise man), 'with whom, after my release from the Christians at Tripoli*, I had received a dower of a hundred dinars, one day addressed me in a reproachful tone, and asked, 'Are not you the contemptible wretch whom my father ransomed from the slavery of the Franks at the cost of ten dinars?' 'Yes,' I replied, 'I am the same wretch whom he delivered from the infidels for ten dinars, and enslaved to you for one hundred!'"

"Poor Sâdee!" said Khan Sahib, with a half sigh that indicated fellow-feeling: "but," added he, "there is a possibility of escape from such a condition. I will tell you a story of an acquaintance of mine, who had the good for-

* Tripoli in Syria the Christians must have been some of the crusaders.

tune to terrify one of these high-born shrews into good behaviour, but his success, as you will hear, was of no benefit to his friends.

"Sâdik Beg was of good family, handsome in person, and possessed of both sense and courage, but he was poor, having no property but his sword and his horse, with which he served as a gentleman retainer of a nabob. The latter, satisfied of the purity of Sâdik's descent, and entertaining a respect for his character, determined to make him the husband of his daughter Hooseinee, who, though beautiful, as her name implied, was remarkable for her haughty manner and ungovernable temper.

"Giving a husband of the condition of Sâdik Beg to a lady of Hooseinee's rank was, according to usage in such unequal matches, like giving her a slave, and as she heard a good report of his personal qualities, she offered no objections to the marriage, which was celebrated soon after it was proposed, and apartments were assigned to the happy couple in the nabob's palace.

"Some of Sâdik Beg's friends rejoiced in his good fortune, as they saw, in the connexion he had formed, a sure prospect of his advance-

ment. Others mourned the fate of so fine and promising a young man, now condemned to bear through life all the humours of a proud and capricious woman; but one of his friends, a little man called Merdek, who was completely henpecked, was particularly rejoiced and quite chuckled at the thought of seeing another in the same condition with himself.

"About a month after the nuptials Merdek met his friend, and with malicious pleasure wished him joy of his marriage. 'Most sincerely do I congratulate you, Sâdik,' said he, 'on this happy event!' 'Thank you, my good fellow, I am very happy indeed, and rendered more so by the joy I perceive it gives my friends.' 'Do you really mean to say you are happy?' said Merdek, with a smile. 'I really am so,' replied Sâdik. 'Nonsense,' said his friend, 'do we not all know to what a termagant you are united? and her temper and high rank combined must no doubt make her a sweet companion.' Here he burst into a loud laugh, and the little man actually strutted with a feeling of superiority over the bridegroom.

"Sâdik, who knew his situation and feelings, was amused instead of being angry. 'My

friend,' said he, 'I quite understand the grounds of your apprehension for my happiness. Before I was married I had heard the same reports as you have done of my beloved bride's disposition; but I am happy to say I have found it quite otherwise: she is a most docile and obedient wife.' 'But how has this miraculous change been wrought?' 'Why,' said Sâdik, 'I believe I have some merit in effecting it, but you shall hear.

"'After the ceremonies of our nuptials were over, I went in my military dress, and with my sword by my side, to the apartment of Hooseinee. She was sitting in a most dignified posture to receive me, and her looks were any thing but inviting As I entered the room a beautiful cat, evidently a great favourite, came purring up to me. I deliberately drew my sword, struck its head off, and taking that in one hand and the body in the other, threw them out of the window. I then very unconcernedly turned to the lady, who appeared in some alarm, she, however, made no observations, but was in every way kind and submissive, and has continued so ever since.'

"'Thank you, my dear fellow,' said little

Merdek, with a significant shake of the head—'a word to the wise;' and away he capered, obviously quite rejoiced.

"It was near evening when this conversation took place; soon after, when the dark cloak of night had enveloped the bright radiance of day, Merdek entered the chamber of his spouse, with something of a martial swagger, armed with a scimitar. The unsuspecting cat came forward as usual to welcome the husband of her mistress, but in an instant her head was divided from her body by a blow from the hand which had so often caressed her. Merdek having proceeded so far courageously, stooped to take up the dissevered members of the cat, but before he could effect this, a blow upon the side of the head from his incensed lady laid him sprawling on the floor.

"The tattle and scandal of the day spreads from zenâneh to zenâneh with surprising rapidity, and the wife of Merdek saw in a moment whose example it was that he imitated. 'Take that,' said she, as she gave him another cuff, 'take that, you paltry wretch; you should,' she added, laughing him to scorn, 'have killed the cat on the wedding day.'"

We were all highly entertained with Khan Sahib's story, which closed the discussion upon the rights, privileges, and usages of Persian ladies; but though I left the party satisfied that these were greater than I imagined, I continued unchanged in my opinion that the civilization of Mahomedan countries must ever be retarded by the condition assigned to the female sex by their Prophet, who, though he neither denies that they have souls, nor shuts the gates of Paradise against them, yet gives them only half the responsibility, half the punishment, and half the enjoyments assigned here and hereafter to the lords of the creation.

Some days after our discussion concerning the rights of Mahomedan ladies, I had a long conversation with Aga Meer as to divorces. These, he told me, were very rare in Persia, it being deemed a greater scandal for a man to put away his wife than for a woman to be divorced

The usual ground of such a proceeding is a sudden fit of passion or jealousy. That is followed by repentance, and the lady is taken back. "But here," he added, "the law has interposed to prevent the abuse of this in-

dulgence by capricious husbands. If a man pronounces three divorces against a free woman, or two* against a slave, he can lawfully wed neither of them again unless they have been espoused by another, and this second husband dies, or shall divorce them."

When it happens that a husband wishes to recover his wife whom he had divorced in a passion, a convenient husband is sought; but the law forbids a mockery being made of such marriages. They may be short in duration, but the parties must live during the period they are united as man and wife

The consequence of this law is, that none but those who add to caprice and passion, doting fondness for the lady, will ever seek a re-union that is attended with such indelicacy and shame. Nevertheless this proceeding sometimes takes place, and no doubt often gives rise to extraordinary incidents. These become the ground-

* The same principle which subjects slaves to only half punishment for crimes renders them liable to less suffering from the caprice of the man who marries them. The husband should, strictly speaking, only have the power to pronounce one divorce and a half on a slave, but the fraction puzzled the doctors of the law, and they have agreed it should be two divorces.

work of many an amusing tale, in which the imagination of the narrator has ample range for exaggeration without exceeding the bounds of possibility.

In all the stories I ever heard, grounded on divorces, the lady is always young and beautiful, the husband old, ugly, rich, and passionate; and the person chosen to be the medium of regaining the wife is, though apparently in such distress that a few piastres will tempt him to act the part required, usually a lover in disguise, or one who becomes, like the Cymon of our great poet, animated by love of the object with whom he is united, to a degree that transforms the supposed clod into a perfect hero of romance, who rather than give up the fair lady, who prefers him, to her old mate, suffers every hardship, and braves every danger in pursuance of her plans and intrigues to prevent their separation. The framing of the plot is invariably given to the female, and it is often such as to do honour to the genius of the sex.

In the Arabian Tales on this subject Haroon-oor-Rasheed, and his vizier Bermekee, are employed to aid the lovers in their night wanderings in Bagdad. In Persia Shah Abbas the

Great, and his minister, act the part of the caliph and his vizier, and both parties are described as promoting by their advice, generosity, and power, the happiness of the new married couple, and bringing to shame the old hunks of a husband and the corrupt ministers of justice, whom his wealth had bribed to lend their endeavours to compel the lovers by all kinds of threats and punishments to consent to a separation.

The stories on this subject are of infinite variety, nor will a well practised story-teller give any tale twice in the same words, or with the same incidents.

Moollâh Adeenah, the story-teller to his majesty, of whom I shall have occasion to speak hereafter, told me, that he considered it as much as his head was worth, to tell a tale twice without variations to the king of kings.

"Besides my own invention," said he, "I have a great book, containing anecdotes on all subjects, and an infinite quantity of amusing matter, which I select at pleasure, and adapt my story to the circumstances of the moment, and to the characters of those who form my audience.

There are no tales in Persia that undergo more changes than those which relate to divorces. The different sects of Mahomedans hold different doctrines on this head, and the story-teller must not offend any of his auditors. Besides, there is often a fear of personal allusions, which compels him to remove his characters from one country to another, to keep them out of harm's way, as my Uncle Toby advised Trim to do with his giants, in that best of all good stories, "The King of Bohemia and his seven Castles."

I have heard a celebrated story of a merchant called Hajee Salah Kej-Khoolk, the cross-grained, told in four or five different ways, and particularly that incident in his life relating to his having, in one of those bursts of passion to which he was liable, divorced, for the third time, a beautiful young female of high rank, whose parents this old, ugly, ill-humoured, wealthy man, had bribed, by settling a large dowry upon her.

According to the edition of this tale, which will serve as a specimen of those grounded on divorces, the old Hajee was at the town of Nishâpoor in Khorassan, when in a violent fit

of rage he pronounced the last divorce upon the lady whose name was Maidee.

She immediately left his house and went to her parents. They, though moved at first by the tears with which she implored them to assist her in resisting all proposals for a re-union with a husband whom she abhorred, soon gave way to the worldly motives which induced them to desire her return to a person who was continually making them presents, and who was now more generous than ever, in the hope of inducing them to promote his interests with one of whom, notwithstanding his conduct, he was distractedly fond.

Maidee seeing no other opportunity of escape from the continued importunities to which she was exposed, listened to the proposals made through the old nurse, of a youth of the name of Omar, who, though poor, was of a respectable family, and whose sister was one of the wives of the governor of the town. This sister had seen Maidee at the public bath, and it was the account which she gave of her surprising beauty and great dower that determined Omar to try every means to make her his wife.

The good nurse, who was attached to the

family of Omar, painted his personal appearance and qualities to Maidee in such colours, that she was quite willing to allow him to be the instrument of her deliverance. The plot was soon settled; Maidee, with affected reluctance, consented to the proposals of Hajee Salah for a re-union, provided the person chosen to be her husband for twenty-four hours was of respectable family and good appearance. These conditions she insisted upon as indispensable to her reputation. Besides she now also pretended that absence had revived her regard for the old Hajee, and she desired the merit of showing (by the sacrifice of a husband whom many might prefer to him) that her attachment was sincere.

The old merchant, in raptures at the prospect of repossessing his favourite, agreed to all she proposed. An agent was immediately appointed to look out for a person of the description she desired, but whose circumstances were such as to make him consent to act the discreditable part of a convenient husband.

Omar threw himself in the way of this agent, and contrived to utter in his hearing boastings of his family, complaints of his relatives, and of the consequent poverty and despair to which he

was reduced. "If I had been a dishonourable fellow," said he (speaking to a companion, but loud enough for the agent to hear), "and one that could have consented to break my pledged word, I might have made my fortune; but, thank God, I am not such a man: I would embrace ruin, and encounter death a thousand times before I would depart from or violate any promise I had made. I have made up my mind to leave Nishâpoor, why should I remain? I know not that I shall have a morsel to eat to-morrow." So saying he abruptly quitted his friend, and walked down the street. He was followed by the agent, who saw, in the respectability of his family, his poverty, and above all his determined adherence to his word, the very person of whom he was in search.

Omar stopped under some trees at the skirts of the town, where the agent came up to him. "A fine evening," said the latter. "I am indifferent as to the state of the weather," replied the apparently agitated Omar. "You seem to have some distress of mind?" "That cannot concern you," said the youth. "You know not," said the wily agent, "aid often comes through means the least expected; if you con-

fide your griefs to me, humble as I appear, I may be able to administer relief." This and some more soothing speeches led Omar with apparent reluctance to open his heart and relate his story

He was, he told the agent, the youngest son of a Tûrkûmân chief, well known in the plains of Kipchâk. He had lately offended his father, by refusing to reveal the place of concealment of a man to whom he had promised protection, and was therefore banished his presence. He had made an offer of his services at Nishâpoor; but after these were accepted, he had been compelled to abandon this prospect, and to part with his horse, his sword, and all he possessed in the world, rather than violate a pledge he had given to an unfortunate friend, whose debts he had just paid by expending the last dinar he had in the world. "But," he added, "to-morrow's sun will not find me in Nishâpoor; I shall trust my stars to guide me to some land where I may be more fortunate."

The agent praised his high sense of honour; and after much circumlocution, proposed to present him with a hundred tomans, provided he would consent to marry the beautiful Maidee

one day, divorce her the next, and instantly quit the country never to return.

Omar pretended at first to be highly indignant at a proposal which he thought derogatory to his honour; but his scruples were gradually removed, and he at length took the money and pledged that word and honour, which had hitherto been his ruin, that he would do every thing which was required

No time was lost in preparing the contract of marriage; the nuptials were celebrated with all due ceremony, and the new-married couple remained alone in a house in a retired part of the town, which had been prepared for them When Maidee was unveiled, her beauty far exceeded all that the imagination of Omar had dared to depict her. He was in raptures, and she was equally enchanted with him. They mutually vowed that whatever was the success of their plan, no power should ever separate them

The dawn of the following morning found Hajee Sâlih at the door, anxious to abridge the happiness of the lovers as much as the law would permit. He had knocked several times and called to the inmates, without receiving any answer; when he was nearly stunned by a blow on

the head, and turning round saw a savage looking Tûrkûmân mounted on a large horse, armed with a long spear, with the shaft of which he had inflicted the blow. "Hold my horse," said the fellow as he dismounted, "while I go into the house." "You have two hands, you old rascal," said another savage, giving him a second blow, and making him hold the horse on which he rode. Before the poor Hajee could recover from his surprise, a party of twenty Tûrkûmâns, with their chief, were around him. He showed an intention of escaping, but that only produced an order for his being put to death if he attempted to move from the spot.

"Where is the darling boy?" exclaimed the chief; "I have forgiven him all: I long to clasp him in my arms!" "Renowned Kâdir Beg," said one of his followers, who had just come out of the house, "you have more to forgive than you are aware of; your son is married." "Married!" exclaimed the old chief. "Is the blood of the first race on the plains of Kipchâk contaminated? Has he married the daughter of a citizen of Nishâpoor?" "No," said the man, "she belongs to a family of rank; she is beautiful as the full moon, and has besides a rich

dower; having been divorced, in a fit of passion, by an ill-tempered wealthy old merchant, who was wholly unworthy of her, but who threatens to take this inestimable pearl from your highness's son Omar Beg."

"Where is the old villain," said the chief, "that dares to claim any one whom I protect?" and he struck his spear on the ground in a rage that made Hajee Sâlih tremble for his life; "but let me see and embrace my long lost boy." He went into the house, but soon returning, directed two of his finest led horses to be brought to the door, on one of which Omar was mounted, and on the other his bride, and away they rode at full speed.

Three men were left behind, two remained in the house, and the third guarded Hajee Sâlih, who stood trembling and holding the two horses, inwardly cursing himself and his agent for selecting a wild Tûrkûmân as a convenient bridegroom to a beautiful Persian lady.

After a delay of some hours the Tûrkûmâns followed their companions. The house at which this scene occurred had been so cautiously selected by Hajee Sâlih to avoid observation, that nobody observed what was passing The mo-

ment he was relieved he ran to the palace of the governor, calling aloud for justice. The governor had gone a hunting, and was not expected till night. When he returned he was so fatigued that he could not be seen till next day. Then so many proofs were required, and so many delays took place, that the Hajee began to suspect the ruler of the city was in league with the Tûrkûmân chief. But when he afterwards learnt that the whole was a contrivance, that Omar's sister was the wife of the governor, and that the parents of Maidee had been reconciled to the marriage, all hope of redress vanished, and he immediately left Nishapoor amid the laughter of high and low, for all seemed equally delighted at what had happened to Hajee Sâlih, the cross-grained. His name has ever since been recorded in story, as an example of the fate which awaits age and ill temper when they aspire to possess youth and beauty, without knowing how to appreciate and guard such blessings, when they have obtained them.

CHAPTER XVI

DEPARTURE FROM KOOM — POOL-E-DELLAK — DERYA-E-KEBEER—VALLEY OF THE SHADOW OF DEATH—STORY OF A GHOOL—REMARKS ON PERSIAN POETRY

From the city of Koom we proceeded to Sooltâneah, where the king was encamped, but I cannot allow my reader to arrive at that place before he has accompanied me to Teheran with the first mission, and heard the account of its reception, and a description of Fettih Ali Shah and his court, before these became familiar with envoys and travellers from Calcutta, London, Paris, and St. Petersburgh.

Our first stage towards Teheran was to a place called Pool-e-Dellâk, or the Barber's Bridge, which, according to the tale of those who lived at the village in the vicinity, was built by the barber of Shah Abbas the Great, to save others from a danger which he himself narrowly

escaped of being drowned when crossing this river.

This munificent barber, we were informed, was very wealthy, as many of his profession are in Persia. Their skill in shaving the heads and trimming the beards of kings and nobles, though highly prized, is subordinate to that which they display as attendants at the warm bath. It is on their superior address in rubbing, pinching, joint-cracking, and cleansing the human frame at the hummums that their fame is established. The luxury of the bath in Persia is enjoyed by all, from the highest to the lowest. These baths are always good, and often splendid buildings. They are sought by the lower classes as essential to health in persons who seldom wear, and when they do, seldomer change, their under garments. The higher ranks indulge in them to still greater excess, and in their progress through the various apartments of graduated heat, from the outer saloon to the houz or fountain of the inner bath, they are waited upon by different domestics, who, besides aiding to undress and dress them, serve them with every species of refreshment. Among these attendants the man of most consequence is the dellâk or barber. For he who

has the honour to bathe and shave a king must not only be perfect in his art, but also a man altogether trustworthy; and confidence amongst eastern rulers is usually followed by favour, and with favour comes fortune. This accounts for barbers building bridges in Persia!

I was one day speaking to my friend Meerzâ Aga of the munificence of the barber of the great Abbas, in a manner which implied doubt of the fact. He observed he knew not whether the barbers of the Seffavean monarchs built bridges, but "I do know," he said, "that the Khâsterâsh (literally personal shaver) of our present sovereign has, in the abundance of his wealth, built a palace for himself close to the royal bath at Teheran. Then," said the good Meerzâ, "he is entitled to riches, for he is a man of pre-eminent excellence in his art, and has had for a long period, under his special care, the magnificent beard of his majesty, which is at this moment, and has been for years, the pride of Persia."

"Well," I replied, "if your personal shaver has built such a mansion, I will no longer doubt the wealth of the barber of Shah Abbas, for that monarch, though he wore no beard, had,

we are told by travellers, and observe from paintings, a noble pair of mustachoes, of which he is said to have been very proud, and the trimmer of which no doubt was, as he deserved to be, a great favourite."

This conversation led to a long dissertation on mustachoes and beards, upon which subject my travels to countries that my Persian friends had never seen enabled me to give them much useful information

I told them many stories about the Sikhs, a nation dwelling between the territories of Cabool and India, who, devoting their beards and whiskers to the goddess of destruction, are always prompt to destroy any one who meddles with them, and who, from a combined feeling of religion and honour, look upon the preservation of life itself as slight in comparison with the preservation of a hair of their beards

I next informed them how beards, whiskers, and mustachoes were once honoured in Europe. I told them an anecdote of the great John De Castro, a former governor of Goa, the capital of the Portuguese possessions in India. He being in want of a considerable loan from the citizens of Goa for a military expedition, was at a loss

for an adequate security*. His first intention was to pledge the bones of his gallant son Don Fernando, who had recently fallen in battle, but finding, on opening the grave, that the carcass was putrid, he offered, as next dear to his personal honour, a lock of his cherished mustachoes This security was accepted, but immediately returned with more than the amount required, young and old vying with each other who should show most respect to so valuable a pledge.

The Persians of my audience twisted their mustachoes with a combined feeling of pleasure and pride on hearing this testimony to the value of that ornament of the visage, and Khan Sahib, who was one of the party, said to me with a smile, "You gentlemen with the mission wear mustachoes in compliance with the prejudices of the Persians, but is it true that many officers of your cavalry now wear them, and that they are again likely to become popular in England?" I said, perhaps they might, adding, I had no doubt that would be the case, if there appeared the slightest chance of their ever turning to

* These facts are mentioned in the Introduction to Mickle's translation of the Lusiad

account in the money-market, like those of John De Castro.

But I must quit this curious and interesting subject to proceed with my narration. At Pool-e-Dellâk the Elchee received letters from the prime minister Hajee Ibrahim, congratulating him upon his near approach to the capital. "My house," the Hajee wrote, "is assigned for your residence, and I am to be honoured by having you as my guest as long as you remain at the abode of sovereignty."

The minister also addressed letters to the mehmandar and to the secretaries of the Elchee, to inquire the exact time of his intended entry into Teheran, and to learn the hours at which he took his meals, the dishes of which he was fondest, and every other minute particular that could enable him to perform the task he had undertaken to his own satisfaction and that of the king, whom he represented as very anxious that every thing should be done to honour and please the British representatives.

From the Barber's Bridge to our next stage was nearly fifty miles. We crossed a salt desert *, which Hajee Hoosein informed me, as he

* This desert is called, where we crossed it, Deryâ-e-

handed me the long snake of the kelliân, was once a sea; but at the birth of Mahomed it dried up, and thus became one of the many miracles to testify the importance to the world of that auspicious event.

The change of surface, from a crust of white clay impregnated with salt, to a stony plain, indicated that we had passed the desert. We immediately afterwards came to a rugged and broken road, through the most frightful precipices and ravines I had ever seen. "I wish these ravines had been made smooth at your prophet's birth," I said to my friend the Hajee, who continued riding along with me. "Here also," said he, in a half alarmed voice, "a miracle was effected, but it was not completed This dreadful place is called the 'Valley of the Angel of Death*.' That terrific minister of God's wrath, according to tradition, has resting-places upon the earth, and this is one of his favourite abodes. He is surrounded by

Kebeer, or Kemeen, which signifies a desert, and the term Deryâ, which means the ocean, being prefixed, is a proof of the truth of the popular belief of this having been once a sea.

* Melek-ool-Mout derrat.

ghools, horrid beings, who when he takes away life feast upon the carcasses.

"The natural shape of these monsters," said Hajee Hoosein, "is terrible, but they can assume those of animals, such as cows or camels, or whatever they choose, often appearing to men as their relations or friends, and then they do not only transform their shapes, but their voices also are altered. The frightful screams and yells, which are often heard amid these dreaded ravines, are changed for the softest and most melodious notes, unwary travellers, deluded by the appearance of friends, or captivated by the forms, and charmed by the music, of these demons, are allured from their path, and after feasting for a few hours on every luxury, are consigned to destruction.

"The number of these ghools," said the Hajee, "has greatly decreased since the birth of the prophet, and they have no power to hurt those who pronounce his name in sincerity of faith. But, what is that?" said he, spurring his horse, and upsetting the top of the kullean which he had in his hand, while he repeated aloud the name of Mahomet, which now resounded through the line. I was myself not

a little startled at seeing a camel, which is one of the shapes the ghools take, but found, on recovering from my momentary alarm, that it was one of our own, which, trying to pass a little to the right of our path, had fallen over a precipice with its load.

When the Hajee rejoined me he was far from being convinced that the camel which had fallen was the same he had at first seen. "It was probable," he said, "that a ghool, by the shape he assumed, had enticed our animal to follow him, and the latter would certainly have been lost but for my presence of mind and timely exclamations These creatures," he added, "are the very lowest of the supernatural world, and, besides being timid, are extremely stupid, and consequently often imposed upon by artful men. I will recount you," he said, "a story that is well authenticated, to prove that what I say is just." I told him I was all attention, and he commenced his tale.

"You know," said he, "that the natives of Isfahan, though not brave, are the most crafty and acute people upon earth, and often supply the want of courage by their address. An

inhabitant of that city was once compelled to travel alone and at night through this dreadful valley. He was a man of ready wit, and fond of adventures, and, though no lion, had great confidence in his cunning, which had brought him through a hundred scrapes and perils that would have embarrassed or destroyed your simple man of valour

"This man, whose name was Ameen Beg, had heard many stories of the ghools of the 'Valley of the Angel of Death,' and thought it likely he might meet one. He prepared accordingly, by putting an egg and a lump of salt in his pocket He had not gone far amidst the rocks we have just passed, when he heard a voice crying 'Holloa, Ameen Beg Isfahânee! you are going the wrong road, you will lose yourself; come this way, I am your friend Kerreem Beg, I know your father old Kerbela Beg, and the street in which you were born.' Ameen knew well the power the ghools had of assuming the shape of any person they choose; and he also knew their skill as genealogists, and their knowledge of towns as well as families; he had therefore little doubt this was one of those creatures alluring him to destruction. He,

however, determined to encounter him, and trust to his art for his escape.

"'Stop, my friend, till I come near you,' was his reply. When Ameen came close to the Ghool, he said, 'You are not my friend Kerreem, you are a lying demon, but you are just the being I desired to meet. I have tried my strength against all the men and all the beasts which exist in the natural world, and I can find nothing that is a match for me. I came therefore to this valley in the hope of encountering a Ghool, that I might prove my prowess upon him.'

"The Ghool, astonished at being addressed in this manner, looked keenly at him, and said, 'Son of Adam, you do not appear so strong.' 'Appearances are deceitful,' replied Ameen, 'but I will give you a proof of my strength. There,' said he, picking up a stone from a rivulet, 'this contains a fluid, try if you can so squeeze it, that it will flow out.' The Ghool took the stone, but after a short attempt returned it, saying 'the thing is impossible.' 'Quite easy,' said the Isfahânee, taking the stone and placing it in the hand in which he had before put the egg: 'Look there!' and

the astonished Ghool, while he heard what he took for the breaking of the stone, saw the liquid run from between Ameen's fingers, and this apparently without any effort.

"Ameen, aided by the darkness, placed the stone upon the ground while he picked up another of a darker hue 'This,' said he, 'I can see contains salt, as you will find if you can crumble it between your fingers;' but the Ghool looking at it confessed he had neither knowledge to discover its qualities, nor strength to break it. 'Give it me,' said his companion impatiently, and having put it into the same hand with the piece of salt, he instantly gave the latter all crushed to the Ghool, who seeing it reduced to powder, tasted it and remained in stupid astonishment at the skill and strength of this wonderful man. Neither was he without alarm lest his strength should be exerted against himself, and he saw no safety in resorting to the shape of a beast, for Ameen had warned him, that if he commenced any such unfair dealing, he would instantly slay him; for Ghools, though long-lived, are not immortal.

"Under such circumstances he thought his best plan was to conciliate the friendship of his

new companion, till he found an opportunity of destroying him.

"'Most wonderful man,' he said, 'will you honour my abode with your presence, it is quite at hand: there you will find every refreshment, and after a comfortable night's rest you can resume your journey.'

"'I have no objection, friend Ghool, to accept your offer, but mark me, I am, in the first place, very passionate, and must not be provoked by any expressions which are in the least disrespectful, and in the second, I am full of penetration, and can see through your designs as clearly as I saw into that hard stone in which I discovered salt. so take care you entertain none that are wicked, or you shall suffer.'

"The Ghool declared that the ear of his guest should be pained by no expression to which it did not befit his dignity to listen; and he swore by the head of his liege lord, the Angel of Death, that he would faithfully respect the rites of hospitality and friendship.

"Thus satisfied, Ameen followed the Ghool through a number of crooked paths, rugged cliffs, and deep ravines, till they came to a large

cave, which was dimly lighted. 'Here,' said the Ghool, 'I dwell, and here my friend will find all he can want for refreshment and repose.' So saying, he led him to various apartments, in which were hoarded every species of grain, and all kinds of merchandize, plundered from travellers who had been deluded to this den, and of whose fate Ameen was too well informed by the bones over which he now and then stumbled, and by the putrid smell produced by some half consumed carcasses.

" 'This will be sufficient for your supper, I hope,' said the Ghool, taking up a large bag of rice; 'a man of your prowess must have a tolerable appetite' 'True,' said Ameen, 'but I eat a sheep, and as much rice as you have there before I proceeded on my journey. I am, consequently, not hungry, but will take a little lest I offend your hospitality.' 'I must boil it for you,' said the demon; 'you do not eat grain and meat raw, as we do Here is a kettle,' said he, taking up one lying amongst the plundered property. 'I will go and get wood for a fire, while you fetch water with that,' pointing to a bag made of the hides of six oxen.

"Ameen waited till he saw his host leave the cave for the wood, and then with great difficulty he dragged the enormous bag to the bank of a dark stream which issued from the rocks at the other end of the cavern, and after being visible for a few yards disappeared under ground.

"How shall I, thought Ameen, prevent my weakness being discovered; this bag I could hardly manage when empty, when full it would require twenty strong men to carry it; what shall I do? I shall certainly be eaten up by this cannibal Ghool, who is now only kept in order by the impression of my great strength. After some minutes' reflection, the Isfahânee thought of a scheme, and began digging a small channel from the stream, towards the place where his supper was preparing.

"'What are you doing?' vociferated the Ghool, as he advanced towards him; 'I sent you for water to boil a little rice, and you have been an hour about it. Cannot you fill the bag and bring it away?' 'Certainly I can,' said Ameen. 'If I were content, after all your kindness, to show my gratitude merely by feats of brute strength, I could lift your stream

if you had a bag large enough to hold it; but here,' said he, pointing to the channel he had begun, 'here is the commencement of a work in which the mind of a man is employed to lessen the labour of his body. This canal, small as it may appear, will carry a stream to the other end of the cave, in which I will construct a dam that you can open and shut at pleasure, and thereby save yourself infinite trouble in fetching water. But pray let me alone till it is finished,' and he began to dig. 'Nonsense,' said the Ghool, seizing the bag and filling it; 'I will carry the water myself, and I advise you to leave off your canal, as you call it, and follow me, that you may eat your supper and go to sleep, you may finish this fine work if you like it to-morrow morning.'

"Ameen congratulated himself on this escape, and was not slow in taking the advice of his host. After having eat heartily of the supper that was prepared, he went to repose on a bed made of the richest coverlets and pillows, which were taken from one of the store-rooms of plundered goods. The Ghool, whose bed was also in the cave, had no sooner lain down than he fell into a sound sleep. The anxiety of Ameen's mind

prevented him from following his example: he rose gently, and having stuffed a long pillow into the middle of his bed, to make it appear as if he were still there, he retired to a concealed place in the cavern to watch the proceedings of the Ghool. The latter awoke a short time before daylight, and rising, went, without making any noise, towards Ameen's bed, where not observing the least stir, he was satisfied that his guest was in a deep sleep, so he took up one of his walking sticks, which was in size like the trunk of a tree, and struck a terrible blow at what he supposed to be Ameen's head. He smiled not to hear a groan, thinking he had deprived him of life; but to make sure of his work, he repeated the blow seven times. He then returned to rest, but had hardly settled himself to sleep, when Ameen, who had crept into the bed, raised his head above the clothes and exclaimed, 'Friend Ghool, what insect could it be that has disturbed me by its tapping? I counted the flap of its little wings seven times on the coverlet. These vermin are very annoying, for though they cannot hurt a man, they disturb his rest!'

"The Ghool's dismay on hearing Ameen

speak at all was great, but that was increased to perfect fright when he heard him describe seven blows, any one of which would have felled an elephant, as seven flaps of an insect's wing. There was no safety, he thought, near so wonderful a man, and he soon afterwards arose and fled from the cave, leaving the Isfahânee its sole master.

"When Ameen found his host gone, he was at no loss to conjecture the cause, and immediately began to survey the treasures with which he was surrounded, and to contrive means for removing them to his home.

"After examining the contents of the cave, and arming himself with a matchlock, which had belonged to some victim of the Ghool, he proceeded to survey the road. He had, however, only gone a short distance when he saw the Ghool returning with a large club in his hand, and accompanied by a fox. Ameen's knowledge of the cunning animal instantly led him to suspect that it had undeceived his enemy, but his presence of mind did not forsake him. 'Take that,' said he to the fox, aiming a ball at him from his matchlock, and shooting him through the head; 'take that for your not performing my orders. That brute,' said he, 'promised to

bring me seven Ghools, that I might chain them, and carry them to Isfahan, and here he has only brought you, who are already my slave.' So saying, he advanced towards the Ghool; but the latter had already taken to flight, and by the aid of his club bounded so rapidly over rocks and precipices, that he was soon out of sight.

"Ameen having well marked the path from the cavern to the road, went to the nearest town and hired camels and mules to remove the property he had acquired. After making restitution to all who remained alive to prove their goods, he became, from what was unclaimed, a man of wealth, all of which was owing to that wit and art which ever overcome brute strength and courage."

I was much pleased with this tale, first as it bore so near a resemblance to some parts of my earliest favourite, Jack the Giant Killer, and next as the last incident of the fox bringing back the Ghool was an exact copy of the story of the Goat and the Lion in the celebrated Hindu work, the Pancha Tantra.

The goat, according to the Hindu tale, took shelter during a storm in the den of a lion; when he saw no chance of escape, he terrified

the king of the beasts by boasting of a celestial origin, and telling him he had been condemned before he could return to Heaven to eat ten elephants, ten tigers, and ten lions. He had, he said, eaten every kind of animal but the lion; and saying this, he marched up to the astonished monster, who fled by a back way from his den. The lion in his flight met a fox, and described to him the appearance of the goat (an animal he had never seen before), his horns, his strange beard, and above all, his boasting language. The fox laughed, and told his majesty how he had been tricked. They went back together, and met the goat at the entrance of the den. The latter at once saw his danger, but his wits did not forsake him. "What conduct is this, you scoundrel?" said he to the fox: "I commanded you to get ten lions, and here you have only brought me one," so saying, he advanced boldly, and the lion, again frightened by his words and actions, fled in terror, allowing the goat to return quietly to his home

I narrated this story to my Persian friend, saying, "This proves to me what I have long conjectured, that the greater part of your tales are taken literally from the Hindus." "Is it

not as likely they have been stolen from us?" was his reply. "No," said I; "for their works in which these tales are written are much older than any you have." "That may be," said he, "but they are not older than Keiomerth, Housheng, or Jemsheed. These were the glorious days of Persia, and no doubt it was in their time the wily Hindus stole our stories, and if our conquering swords have since made us masters of India, and we have plundered a few tales along with other articles, why we have only recovered our own."

Khan Sahib, who had been riding along with us, smoking his kelhân, but who had not as yet spoken a word, now, with much gravity, took up the conversation. "I have listened," said he, "with great attention to Hajee Hoosein's most wonderful tale of the Ghool, and," addressing me, "to your supplement about a goat, a fox, and a lion. I shall store what I have heard in my memory for the benefit of my excellent grandmother, whom it is my duty to amuse. These tales shall also be given word for word to my little children, who will no doubt be as much delighted as I have been, to hear how a stupid monster was outwitted by a lying

rogue, and how an impudent goat frightened a valiant lion."

"The dispute," said Khan Sahib, "regarding the invention of such sublime productions, no doubt involves matter deeply associated with the fame of the renowned empires of India and Persia; and, in the present dearth of that article, I do think they are right in claiming all they can for their ancestors."

"I quite understand, my good friend," said I, "the contempt you bestow upon the nursery tales with which the Hajee and I have been entertaining each other, but, believe me, he who desires to be well acquainted with a people will not reject their popular stories or local superstitions. Depend upon it, that man is too far advanced into an artificial state of society who is a stranger to the effects which tales and stories like these have upon the feelings of a nation; and his opinions of its character are never likely to be more erroneous than when, in the pride of reason, he despises such means of forming his judgment."

"Well, well," said Khan Sahib, "there may be some truth in what you say; and I am the more inclined to believe it, as all the learning

and philosophy which my good father endea-voured to instil into me never wholly eradicated my early predilection for such stories. I wish not to dispute the claim of our Indian neighbours to the merit of inventing those maxims of wisdom, which have been delivered to posterity through the mouths of cats, monkeys, goats, parrots, foxes, jackalls, and lions But," added he, "as far as the reputation of the creative genius of Persia is concerned, I shall remain content with the wonders of the Shâh-nâmeh, told as they are in the language of the immortal Firdousee."

Though I could not give up my fondness for fables, I was quite ready to concur with my friend in his admiration of Firdousee, and nothing more was necessary to make him dilate upon this favourite work. His memory is extraordinary; and while I listened with pleasure to his recitation of several of the most ancient, and at the same time most beautiful passages of Persian poetry, I was instructed by his critical remarks, for he combines, with a knowledge of the European taste for simplicity, a love for Asiatic splendour of diction; and is particularly versed in those allusions in which their poetry

abounds. He recited to me, from the Shâh-nâmeh, the greater part of the episode of the combats between Roostem and his unknown son Soohrâb.

This episode, in the first lines of which the poet tells his reader, "* It is a tale full of the waters of the eye," is perhaps one of the greatest efforts of Firdousee's genius; and he rises even above himself in the relation of the death of Soohrâb and the insanity of his distracted mother.

The effect produced on the unhappy princess by the account of her son's death is instantaneous She sets fire to her palace, desiring, when he who constituted her sole object in life was gone, to perish amid that splendour, which she valued on his account alone. Torn from the flames by her attendants, she commanded them to bring the body of her son, his horse, his arms, and his clothes.

"She kissed the horse's forehead, she bathed its hoofs with her tears; she clothed herself in the blood-stained garments of her son, she drew his bow, she wielded his lance, his sword and his mace; and these fond and frantic actions were continued till nature was overpowered, and the

* "Yekee dâstân poor ab-e-cheshem"

distracted mother departed to join her beloved Soohrâb."

No translation in verse can convey to the mere English reader any just impression of the whole poem of the Shâh-nâmeh. The idiom in which it is written, and the allusions and metaphors with which it abounds, are too foreign to our language and taste to admit of success in such an undertaking; but a prose translation of this great work is a desideratum, and select passages might bear a poetical form. He, however, who attempts such a task, will not be successful unless possessed of a genius that raises him above the mechanical effort of a versifier. If ever such a translator devote himself to the beauties of this poem, he will find much to gratify himself and others.

I have before given a specimen of Firdousee's power in describing a battle; but though this is a species of composition in which the Persians consider him to excel, I have been more pleased with him when he strikes a softer and more harmonious note. His tales of love are often delightful, and nothing can exceed some of his descriptions of scenery

I had long entertained this opinion, but was

confirmed in it by a passage which Khan Sahib recited to me, after concluding the story of Soohrâb. It was an account of the events which took place when Siyâvesh was nominated by Afrâsiâb to govern the empire of Cheen. The young prince, anxious to enjoy with his beautiful bride Feringheesh every luxury which this world could afford, sent persons in every direction over his extensive territories, to select the most agreeable and salubrious spot, that he might there fix his residence. The choice fell upon the city of Kung, which is represented to be a perfect terrestrial paradise. One line in the description of this favoured spot struck me as an instance of the power of a poet to seize the finest shades of distinction that belong to language, and to convey by such terms the most correct idea to the mind. Speaking of the climate of Kung, Firdousee says,

* "Its warmth was not heat, and its coolness was not cold."

I expressed to Khan Sahib my admiration of this line, adding my regret that a poet who could write with such simplicity and beauty should indulge so often in forced metaphor, and hyperbolical phrases.

* "Gherm-esh ne-ghermee bood, oo serd-esh ne-serd."

"Why," said my little friend, "I really think your quarrelling with Firdousee, because he wrote according to the taste of the nation to which he belonged, is something like finding fault with the Persians because they do not wear cocked hats and tight pantaloons, instead of lambs' wool caps and loose trowsers. They delight, and ever have done, in those conceits and images which offend you." "But yet," said I, "Sâdee is a great favourite, and he is almost always simple and clear in his style."

"Sâdee," said Khan Sahib. "has, as you state, a great reputation in Persia, but it is rather as a wise man and a moralist, than a poet He seeks by fiction to adorn, not encumber truth, and the admiration of his reader is invariably given to the sentiment more than to the language in which it is clothed.

"As a proof," continued my friend, "that this is just, let us take two stanzas. In the first of these Sâdee thus describes himself:

'* The snows of age rest upon my head,
Yet my disposition still makes me young'

In these lines, marked as they are by simplicity

* Berf-e-peeree meenesheened ber ser-em
Hem-cheon-ân tebe-em jevânee kooned

and beauty, the thought, not the expression, is what we most admire. In the second, when addressing sovereigns, he says,

'* Be merciful, and learn to conquer without an army,
Seize upon the hearts of mankind, and be acknowledged
the world's conqueror'

The boldness and sublimity of the lesson conveyed in this couplet predominates over the poetry, and this is the case throughout the works of Sâdee. How different are the sweet and musical strains of Hafiz! whose whole fame rests upon the creative fancy of his imagination, and the easy flow of his numbers. He delights us by the very scorn with which he rejects all sobriety of thought, and all continuity of subject. As a poet he is one of the first favourites of his countrymen, whose enthusiastic admiration is given to passages in his works that your taste would condemn; for instance, when referring to the fiction which relates that the tulip first sprung up in the soil which was moistened with the blood of Ferhâd, the celebrated lover of Sheereen, he says,

* Rehim koon oo bee fouj der teskeen bash
Dilhâ-e-âlem gheer oo shâh-e-âlem-gheer bâsh

'* Perhaps the tulip feared the evils of destiny,
Thence, while it lives, it bears the wine-goblet on its stalk'

"No conceit can be more fanciful, and you will perhaps add, more extravagant; but this stanza is most particularly admired by the Persians, much more so than a succeeding one in the same ode, where the poet, with a simplicity and feeling that will delight you, gives the reason for not having left his native place.

'† They will not allow me to proceed upon my travels,
Those gentle gales of Mosellay,
That limpid stream of Rooknâbâd'

"Hâfiz," said Khan Sahib, "has the singular good fortune of being alike praised by saints and sinners. His odes are sung by the young and the joyous, who, by taking them in the literal sense, find nothing but an excitement to pass the spring of life in the enjoyment of the world's luxuries, while the contemplative sage, considering this poet as a religious enthusiast, attaches a mystical meaning to every line, and repeats his odes as he would an orison. At the time of his death," continued my friend, "there

* Meger kih lâleh be-dânist bee-wefâ-e-deher
Kih tâ be-zâd oo be-shood jâm-e-mei z' kef-ne-nihad

† Ne-meedihend ijâzet me-râ be-seir-oo-Sefer
Neseem-e-bâd-e-mooselâ we âb-e-Rooknâbâd

were many who deemed his works sinful and impious. These went so far as to arrest the procession of his funeral. The dispute rose high, and the parties were likely to come to blows, when it was agreed that a fâl, or lot, should be taken from his book. If that were favourable to religion, his friends were to proceed; but if calculated to promote vice, they promised not to carry his body to the sacred ground appropriated for its reception.

"The volume of odes was produced, and it was opened by a person whose eyes were bound, seven pages were counted back, when the heaven-directed finger pointed to one of his inspired stanzas,

'* Withdraw not your steps from the obsequies of Hafiz
Though immersed in sin he will rise into paradise'

"The admirers of the poet shouted with delight, and those who had doubted joined in carrying his remains to a shrine near Shiraz, where, from that day to this, his tomb is visited by pilgrims of all classes and ages."

I found my friend Khan Sahib, however par-

* Kedem dereegh medâr ez jinâza-e-Hâfiz
Kih ger-chih gherek-e-goonâh est meereved be-bihisht.

tial from his habits to a literal interpretation of many passages, dwelt upon others that he deemed mystical with all the rapture of a Soofee. I asked him if he considered Hâfiz equal in this description of poetry to the celebrated author of the Mesnevee, who is usually called the Moollâh of Room *? "Certainly not," was his reply; "there is a depth and sublimity in the Mesnevee, which is equalled by no poet of this class. But I will repeat, in answer to your question, the observation of a famous Persian critic

"A friend asked him how it happened that the two most celebrated Persian Soofee poets should differ so much in their description of love? Hâfiz, in the commencement of his work, observes:

† Love at first sight appeared easy, but afterwards fell of difficulties'

The author of the Mesnevee, in exact opposition, says,

'‡ Love at first resembles a bloody murderer,
That he may alarm all who are without his pale'

---

* Turkey

† Kih ishk âsân nemood avvel welee ooftâd mooshkil-ha.

‡ Ishk avvel choo ser-khoonee booved,
Tâ be-tersend her kih beeroonee booved.

"'Poor Hâfiz,' said the critic, shaking his head, 'did not find out till the last, what the wiser Moollâh saw at a glance.'"

I was proceeding to make some further observations, when the sound of music and the appearance of the neighbouring villagers with their chiefs announced that we were near our encampment, and both Khan Sahib and myself were obliged to take our places in the order of march, which was always formed when we met such parties.

CHAPTER XVII

DISTANT VIEW OF TEHERAN—DEMAVEND—RHE—ENTRANCE INTO THE CAPITAL—HAJEE IBRAHIM—ZAL KHAN—TERMS OF COURTESY

The first distant view we had of Teheran, the modern capital of Persia, was very imposing. It is situated near the foot of Elboorz, a mountain of the great range which stretches from Europe to the utmost limits of Asia. This range would appear high, were it not for Demavend, whose lofty peak, rising above the clouds, and covered with eternal snow, gives a diminutive appearance to every thing in its vicinity.

We had seen Demavend at the distance of one hundred miles from its base, but it increased in magnificence as we advanced, and those amongst us who delighted in the pages of Firdousee now planned an early visit to this remarkable mountain, whose summit that poet describes as "far from the abode of man, and near to Heaven." A Persian of our party, called Meerzâ Ibrahim, who had been at De-

mavend, increased our curiosity by a detail of the wonders we should see when we visited that place. "Amongst others," said he, "is the cave that was once the habitation of the Deev-e-Seffeed, who was slain by Roostem; and if fortunate," he added, "you may catch a glimpse of the Deev's daughter, whose dwelling is on the point of an inaccessible rock, at the edge of which she now and then appears; and is reported, notwithstanding her age, which cannot be less than two thousand four hundred years, to be as active with her distaff, and looking as well as ever.

"Higher up the mountain," continued our informant, "amid rocks and snow, which forbid all mortal approach, dwells Zohâk, the most wicked of kings, surrounded by a court of magicians and sorcerers, this at least is the belief of the worshippers of fire. But it has been considered as unworthy of credit by the Mahomedan historians of Persia, who, however, do not treat so lightly the record which asserts, that in ancient times, when Menoo-cheher made peace with Afrâsiâb*, one of the articles of the

* The sovereign of Tartary

treaty was, that Persia was to have all the country in a north-east direction, over which an arrow could be shot from Demavend. A hero, called Arish, ascended to the top of the mountain, and such was his miraculous prowess that he sent an arrow to the banks of the Oxus, a distance of between five and six hundred miles. Monarchs in these days," said Meerzâ Ibrahim, "we are assured were very particular in performing their treaties, and the country was faithfully ceded."

"I have read all the discussions upon this subject," said Meerzâ Aga Meer, who here joined in the conversation. "One Persian historian, who relates this fact, admits that it is incomprehensible, but at the same time adds, that he deems it his duty to give it as received from former writers, who state, that the arrow which was discharged at sunrise did not fall till noon.

"Another author of high reputation informs us, that the 'Festival of the Arrow *,' on the 13th of October †, which is still kept by the

* Teer-gah

† The month of October, in the ancient Persian calendar, is called Teer, or the Arrow

followers of Zoroaster, is in commemoration of this event.

"The arrow about which so much has been said and written," added Aga Meer, "is admitted by almost all to have been of gold. Some philosophers, however, have conjectured that it contained quicksilver and other substances, which, when heated by the sun, added to its projectile force; and we are informed, that the great 'Boo-Ali-seenâ* did not consider this feat beyond the compass of human ingenuity."

I concluded this discussion about the wonderful arrow by observing, that some sceptical commentators on this passage of ancient history had given their opinion, that the story of the golden arrow, flying from Demavend to the Oxus, was nothing more than a bold metaphor, to express that the Persians conquered that extent of country by their skill in archery; "but the opinions of such writers," I said, "are rejected by all who prefer plain facts to far-fetched metaphors."

At a short distance from our camp we observed several mounds of earth and ruined walls, which we were told was all that remained of the

* Avicenna

once famous Ragas of Tobit—the Rhages of the Greeks, and the Rhe of the Persians.

While all who had imagination and a love of antiquity dwelt with delight on the prospect of ascending Demávend, and visiting the ruins of Rhe, the men of business looked only to Teheran, which appeared to me to offer little to the view which was either grand or pleasing. One palace alone attracted any portion of my admiration. It stood near the base of the mountain Elboorz, on a commanding site, and was every way suited for a royal residence.

We were called from our plans and prospects to prepare for the entry of the Mission into the capital; but the ceremonies of the procession were not yet fully arranged. Letters and notes passed every minute; secretaries and confidential messengers went to and fro without intermission These communications and messages chiefly related to the forms of our reception The period of entering Teheran had been long fixed by the Elchee, who had consulted an eminent astrologer at Isfahan upon this subject. The wise man, after casting his nativity, and comparing what he found written in the book of his destiny with the object of his

Mission, which he had been told was the establishment of friendly intercourse with Persia, declared, by a paper given under his hand, for which he was no doubt well fee'd, "That, provided the Elchee entered the gate of Teheran at forty-five minutes past two o'clock, P. M. on the 13th of November, 1800, success would attend his negotiation, and he would accomplish all his wishes."

Meerzâ Aga Meer, who, like the most enlightened of his countrymen, believed firmly in the occult science of astrology, had the best chronometer in our party intrusted to his care. It was given him, because his situation enabled him to ride in the procession sufficiently near the Elchee to prompt him when to go a little faster or slower, in order that the gate of the capital might be entered at the exact moment, a point to which the astrologer had attached the greatest importance.

The party who came out some miles to welcome the Elchee consisted of several noblemen, the chief of whom was Nou Rôz Khan Kajir, the Lord of Requests and Commander of the King's Guard.

About six hundred horse, principally royal

guards, accompanied this chief. We prepared for their reception by sounding the trumpets and beating the drums of our cavalry and infantry, and putting all the suite, European and Native, in regular array.

When the parties were within twenty yards of each other they halted, and Nou Rôz Khan prepared to dismount. The Elchee did the same. The latter poised himself a moment in the stirrup, lest his foot should be on the ground before that of the Persian nobleman, which would have marked inferiority But the soldier-like movements of Nou Rôz Khan showed at once he was a manly fellow, and no stickler about ceremonies. He not only dismounted with expedition, but hastened, before the Elchee had time to quit his horse, to come forward and welcome the guest of his sovereign.

We had all dismounted at the instant the Elchee did, and after mutual introduction the whole party were again on their march, the Elchee and Nou Rôz Khan riding exactly parallel, and their attendants a little in the rear, nearer or more remote, according to their respective ranks.

On the plain which we passed, before coming

to the capital, some of the guards of the king displayed their skill in horsemanship. They threw the Jerreed* at each other with excellent aim; and it was often only avoided by extraordinary activity, the horseman sometimes to all appearance throwing himself from his horse, while the Jerreed whizzed over him.

Another exercise, called the Doghela-Bâzee, is performed by the rider holding a stick little more than a yard long in his hand, one end of which he throws with great force on the ground, on the near side of the horse when at full gallop; the direction given by this stroke causes it to rebound over the horse's head, and the rider catches it while yet whirling round in the air.

But of all these exhibitions, that which pleased me most was the skill they displayed as marksmen. When at full speed, the rider throws a lemon over his head, and twisting his body completely round to the left, fires† at it

* A wooden javelin

† The modern Persian horseman has changed the bow of his ancestors for a match-lock, but the mode of using his arms is the same The Parthians are described, in their successful contests with the disciplined legions of Rome, as carrying on their attacks, not against the army but the supplies by which it was supported

from the off-flank of the horse, almost always with good aim, and often hitting it. This appeared to me, as combining the different motions of the horse, the rider, and the lemon, quite wonderful, but, like other surprising feats, it is the result of constant practice; for the child in Persia commences this exercise at six or seven years of age, and it is never abandoned, while there is strength left to sit upon a horse and to pull a trigger.

The crowds of people we now saw announced that we were in the suburbs of Teheran. I heard Aga Meer whisper the Elchee, "You have yet ten minutes,—a little slower. Quicker!" was afterwards pronounced in an under tone. Again I heard "Slower!" then "Now!" and the charger of the Elchee put his foot over the

"The mode in which the Parthian warrior took his unerring aim, while his horse was carrying him from his enemy," says the author of the History of Persia, "may be viewed as a personification of the system of warfare, by which his nation, during this era of its history, maintained its independence. The system was suited to the soil, to the man, and to the fleet and robust animal on which he was mounted, and its success was so certain, that the bravest veterans of Rome murmured when their leaders talked of a Parthian war'—History of Persia, vol i p. 88

threshold of the gate of Teheran. "Al hamd-ool-illâh! Thanks be to God!" said the Meer, with a delighted countenance; "it was the very moment,—how fortunate!" This joy, and the expression of it, told all to Nou Rôz Khan, who evidently deemed the proceeding as a matter of course; and when he heard the name of the astrologer who was consulted at Isfahan, he seemed to think, after such a happy moment of arrival, there could be no doubt of the fulfilment of his predictions. This sentiment was general among the Persians in our suite. Some of them might have doubted the sincerity of the Elchee's belief in the occult sciences, but even these were pleased at the consideration given to what he deemed their prejudices

One day after the treaties were concluded, I heard the prime minister say, with a smile, to the Elchee, "You see, with all your European knowledge, of what consequence it is to attend to a Persian astrologer, who instructs you to fight us with our own weapons, the stars and planets."

On entering Teheran, we were conducted through the streets to the house of the prime

minister, Hajee Ibrahim. Here Nou Rôz Khan left us; but we were welcomed at the gate of the dwelling by several of the friends and principal members of the minister's family, and we had hardly seated ourselves, when the Hajee was announced as coming to visit his guests

My curiosity to see this extraordinary man was very great. "There must," I thought, "be something wonderful in the appearance as well as in the mind of that human being, who, by the mere force of his character, has raised himself from the rank of an humble magistrate, in the city of Shiraz, to be a 'puller-down and setter-up of kings,' who, without any pretensions to military talent, and without learning sufficient to write a note or read three lines, has overcome heroes, has established sovereigns on the throne of Persia, and by his firmness and wisdom has given a peace and tranquillity to his native land beyond what it has known for a century."

The Persians are a handsome race of men, and fond of decorating their persons I expected therefore to see Hajee Ibrahim enter, elegantly dressed, with a dignified if not an elastic step, with a commanding figure, a clear animated countenance, with features expressive

of his superior character, and above all, with two piercing eyes distinguished perhaps by that restless wandering from object to object, which indicates the care and anxiety of a man who held power and life by so precarious a tenure as a prime minister of Persia.

We all arose as he was announced, and the Elchee went forward to meet him. Judge of my surprise when I saw, instead of the magnificent personage of my imagination, a heavy-looking man, dressed in very plain clothes, enter the room, and proceed towards his seat, with a rolling of the body that almost approached to a waddle. His features were rather coarse, and his eyes, though clear, had nothing of the piercing or searching qualities I had anticipated. As to his manners, they did not appear to have changed with his condition, but to be still those of a good respectable citizen of Shiraz. I was, I must confess, quite disappointed; but before the half hour expired, which he passed in conversation with the Elchee, my mind had undergone another change, for there was in all he said a good sense, a sincerity, and a strength, that quite convinced me of the justice of the fame he had acquired.

The Hajee's brother, Abd-ool-Raheem Khan, came the day after our arrival to pay his respects to the Elchee. An attempt was made by the steward of the minister's household to obtain more deference for this person than he was from his rank entitled to "The Hajee," said the politic major-domo, "always gives the seat of honour to Abd-ool-Raheem Khan, who is his elder brother," "He is right in so doing," said the Elchee, "but this gentleman is not my elder brother!" The reply indicated a knowledge of the relations on which precedence was to be given or refused, which terminated the discussion In came Abd-ool-Raheem Khan, a very fat and dull man, whose merit appeared limited to that of being brother to a prime minister He took his seat very contentedly; staid half an hour; spoke half a sentence—and retired.

The first night I passed at Hajee Ibrahim's, I was disturbed by a continued mumbling and confused noise in the next apartment, which, upon inquiry, I found proceeded from the extreme piety of its inmate, Zàl Khan of Khisht.

This remarkable man had established a great name in his native mountains, betwixt Abusheher and Shiraz; and he was long distinguished

as one of the bravest and most attached followers of the Zend family. When the death of Lootf Ali Khan terminated its power, he, along with the other governors of provinces and districts in Fars, submitted to Aga Mahomed Khan. That cautious and cruel monarch, dreading the ability, and doubtful of the allegiance of this chief, ordered his eyes to be put out: an appeal for the recall of the sentence being treated with disdain, Zâl Khan loaded the tyrant with curses. "Cut out his tongue," was the second order. This mandate was imperfectly executed, and the loss of half this member deprived him of speech. Being afterwards persuaded that its being cut close to the root would enable him to speak so as to be understood, he submitted to the operation, and the effect has been, that his voice, though indistinct and thick, is yet intelligible to persons accustomed to converse with him. This I experienced from daily intercourse. He often spoke to me of his sufferings, and of the humanity of the present king, who had restored him to his situation as head of his tribe, and governor of Khisht.

I am not an anatomist, and cannot therefore give a reason why a man, who could not articu-

late with half a tongue, should speak when he had none at all, but the facts are as stated, and I had them from the very best authority, old Zâl Khan himself.

Some points of no small consequence underwent discussion the day after we reached Teheran. The Persian language is very copious, and has many terms which, though signifying in substance the same, have a shade of difference in the application, which enables those versed in such matters to use them so as to denote the rank and respective relations of the parties who hold intercourse with each other. For instance, the word friendship may be expressed by three or four terms, which imply superiority, equality, or inferiority. The speaker may, by the manner in which he introduces the expression "I have a regard for you"—"I esteem your friendship"—"My duty always attends you"—or, "My service is at your command," mark the respect or relation in which he holds him whom he addresses. These are in Persia, as with us, expressions of courtesy, but in that country the subject meets much more attention than we give it, and especially in all communications with a foreign envoy.

Both the Elchee and his host, Hajee Ibrahim might have smiled inwardly at the trifling nature of such forms, but the relation in which they stood towards each made it necessary to observe them; and as the terms they used in conversation were likely to serve as a standard to others it was judged necessary to have a congress of Meerzâs or secretaries, skilled in such niceties to settle this important point.

Two very formal men were deputed by the minister; and Aga Meer and Mahomed Hoosein the Indian Moonshee, attended on the part of the Elchee. The negotiation was opened on the admitted basis of perfect equality of rank between the parties. Notwithstanding the apparent simplicity of the subject, much discussion ensued. My Indian friend gave me a full account of it. "The minister's Meerzâs," said he, "endeavoured to establish points which though seemingly trivial, would have given a shade of superiority to their master which I would not admit they rather alarmed Aga Meer, who, being a Persian, could not be expected to stand up against them, at the hazard of giving offence to those of his country who were in power but what did I care," said Ma

homed Hoosein, swelling with the part he had acted at this conference, "for their prime ministers? I know no superiors but my master and the English government

"They told me," he added, "that by giving now and then a term of respect to Hajee Ibrahim, more than he received, the Elchee would add to the consequence of that minister, and not diminish his own, as they were informed that people in England cared little about such matters. I told them, however, that the Elchee, in all he did or said, considered the impressions he was to make in Persia, not in England, and that he would abandon no claims to respect, even in matters of the slightest word or form, which tended in any manner to affect his representative character with the nation to which he was sent

"Seeing," said the good Moonshee*, "that nothing was to be gained from me, they came at

* This excellent man is living on a small estate in his native country, the northern Circars, granted for his services in Persia and other quarters. He accompanied his old master, the Elchee, in the campaign in India of 1817—18, and in consideration of this further service to the public, his estate has been settled upon his children

last to an amicable arrangement." The word friendship, which implies perfect equality, may be used in common conversation; but occasionally the terms, "my duty waits upon you," or, "my service is at your command," are to be introduced, with this express provision, that whenever one party in the excess of his politeness uses them, the other is to take the earliest opportunity of doing the same. This rule is also to be particularly observed in the important phrases of "you represented," "you said," or, "you commanded" "You said," is settled as the term of equality, but "you commanded," it is agreed, may be frequently interchanged, as tending to show the great respect the parties entertain for each other.

Possessed of this information, I watched the first interview of those for whom this arrangement was made with no little interest. I noticed that the Elchee replied immediately to the first concession made by Hajee Ibrahim by a similar expression. but when he himself made one some time afterwards, which did not meet with so prompt a return, I was amused to see him retreat upon his terms of equality. This had the desired effect. No more encroachments

were made upon his dignity, and from his conduct on this occasion, and others of similar importance, he was no doubt considered by the Persians as a most accomplished diplomatist!

The termination of this battle of words at Teheran, added to that of forms at Shiraz, were happy preparations for the discussions regarding the ceremonies of our presentation to the king; but these will be noticed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER XVIII

TERMS OF RECEPTION AT COURT—SECOND VISIT—DELIVERY OF PRESENTS—KING'S GRANT—PRIVATE INTERVIEWS—KING'S ANCESTORS—CROWN JEWELS—KING'S LOVE OF A JOKE—MODE OF PASSING HIS TIME—HAREM—ROYAL MEALS—HAJEE IBRAHIM—HIS CHARACTER AND DEATH

THE Elchee's reputation as a man conversant with forms, and much alive to their importance in all diplomatic proceedings, smoothed the way for the settlement he had to make regarding his reception at court. There were still, however, many minor points to be arranged which required much grave discussion. One presented itself on the very threshold of this negotiation, with which we were all highly amused.

Many observations had been made on our dress at Shiraz, but no records existed at the provincial capital, which could authorise the minister of the prince to object to the Elchee's being presented in his uniform. The outward

appearance of our heads, the hair of which had been recently cropped, obtained us high compliments, at the expense of our friends the Russians. That nation had some years before invaded the territory of Persia, and its troops were then threatening another attack The consequence was a very hostile feeling towards it amongst the courtiers and ministers of the king of kings. Chirâgh Ali Khan, when we were at Shiraz, dilated on our habits as much more cleanly than our christian brethren of the north. "They delight in nothing," said he, "but strong liquor and hogs' flesh; and, would you believe it?" addressing himself to the Elchee, "they are so fond of the vile animal on which they live, that they actually tie their hair in a form which resembles its tail" The Elchee looked as if incredulous of this last usage, though it was, to my knowledge, not more than a twelvemouth since his own head had been shorn of the ornament held in such abomination

From what had passed, we thought that we were safe on the point of dress, but we were mistaken. Two days after our arrival at Isfahan, a Meerzâ came on the part of Hajee Ibrahim, to speak to the Elchee on this subject.

After many apologies and explanations regarding the minute attention to ceremonies at the Persian court, he observed, that it even related to dress; and as the Elchee was to be presented to the king, it was expected he would put on garments suited to the occasion. The Elchee replied, he did not know what was meant, but that he could wear no dress except that of his country; and being a soldier, he wore the uniform belonging to his station in the army. The Meerzâ smiled, and said they were better informed upon such subjects than the Elchee imagined. He then produced a parcel; and after opening a number of envelopes, he showed several small pictures of embassadors who had visited Persia two centuries ago. One, which was called the painting of the English representative, and believed to be Sir Anthony Shirley, was dressed in the full costume of the time of queen Elizabeth. "This," said the Meerzâ, "is the pattern which it is hoped you will adopt, as his majesty desires to follow in all points the usages of the Seffavean kings, since they well understood what was due to the dignity of the throne of Persia."

The Elchee could not help smiling at this

proposition; but seeing the Meerzâ look grave, he begged pardon, and told him, that when he saw Hajee Ibrahim he would satisfy him fully on this subject. The minister came soon afterwards into the room, and was much entertained at the account of the changes which fashion had made in our dress, since the days of good Queen Bess "Well, well," said he, in his short but forcible manner, "our habits are so different from yours on this point that the mistake is not surprising, and though I do not altogether like a usage which makes children laugh at the garments of their grandfathers, every country has a right to its own customs, and to these its representatives should adhere I must," he said, in a whisper, "plague you a little on such points, for I have a bad name, from not being a stickler for forms, and I shall trust," he added, "to your good nature to allow me to establish my character."

The marching with fixed bayonets, drawn swords, and trumpets sounding, to the great gate of the palace, the spot where he was to dismount—the manner in which he was to approach the king, and the place where he was to sit, were all settled to the satisfaction of the

Elchee. An objection was at first made to the suite being seated, but numerous books as well as pictures were produced, to prove the usage of the Seffavean monarchs on this head, and the point was conceded

There was much and serious discussion as to the rank of the person to be appointed to meet the Elchee at the entrance room, where, according to etiquette, he must remain till his majesty was announced as ready to receive him.

Sûlimân Khan Kajir, first cousin and son-in-law of the king, and who had at one period aspired to the throne, was the person fixed upon to act this part of the drama No compliment could be greater to the embassy than its being assigned to him , but there was one drawback : —It was urged, that the said Sûlimân Khan was of too high rank to rise from his seat to receive any man upon earth, except the king, or a prince of the blood-royal ; he was besides Lord* of the Court, an office which gave him the place of majesty itself when the king was absent. Notwithstanding these pretensions, it was agreed that he should make a slight movement, or a half rise, when the Elchee

* Deevân-Beg

entered the room, and that the latter should seat himself on the carpet on a footing of equality.

Every thing being arranged, we proceeded towards the "Threshold of the World's Glory," on the morning of the sixteenth of November, in the year of our Lord eighteen hundred! We were all dressed in our best attire. A crowd had assembled near the house of Hajee Ibrahim, and the streets were filled with gazers at the strangers.

The infantry part of the escort, with their drums and fifes, and all the Hindustannee public servants in scarlet and gold, preceded the Elchee, who rode a beautiful Arabian horse richly caparisoned, but entirely in the English style, he was followed by the gentlemen of his suite and his escort of cavalry.

When we came within half a mile of the palace all was silence and order it was the state of Asia with the discipline of Europe. We passed through rows of men and horses, and even the latter appeared as if afraid to shake their heads. Many persons whom we saw in the first square of the citadel, before we entered the palace, were richly dressed, and some of the horses were decked out with

bridles, saddles, and trappings of great value; but it was not until we passed the last gate of the palace, and came into the garden in front of the king's hall of audience, a highly ornamented and spacious building, that we could form any idea of the splendour of the Persian court.

A canal flowed in the centre of a garden, which supplied a number of fountains; to the right and left of which were broad paved walks, and beyond these were rows of trees. Between the trees and the high wall encircling the palace files of matchlock-men were drawn up; and within the avenues, from the gate to the hall of audience, all the princes, nobles, courtiers, and officers of state, were marshalled in separate lines, according to their rank, from the lowest officer of the king's guard, who occupied the place nearest the entrance, to the heir apparent, Abbas Meerzà, who stood on the right of his brothers, and within a few paces of the throne.

There was not one person in all this array who had not a gold-hilted sword, a Cashmire shawl round his cap, and another round his waist. Many of the princes and nobles were

magnificently dressed, but all was forgotten as soon as the eye rested upon the king.

He appeared to be above the middle size, his age little more than thirty, his complexion rather fair; his features were regular and fine, with an expression denoting quickness and intelligence His beard attracted much of our attention; it was full, black, and glossy, and flowed to his middle. His dress baffled all description. The ground of his robes was white, but he was so covered with jewels of an extraordinary size, and their splendour, from his being seated where the rays of the sun played upon them, was so dazzling, that it was impossible to distinguish the minute parts which combined to give such amazing brilliancy to his whole figure.

The two chief officers of ceremonies, who carried golden sticks, stopped twice, as they advanced towards the throne, to make a low obeisance, and the Elchee at the same time took off his hat. When near the entrance of the hall the procession stopped, and the lord of requests said, "Captain John Malcolm is come, as envoy from the governor-general of India to your majesty." The king, looking to the Elchee, said,

in a pleasing and manly voice, "You are welcome*."

We then ascended the steps of the hall, and were seated, as had been previously arranged. The letter from the governor-general, which had been carried in the procession on a golden tray, was opened and read. His majesty inquired after the health of the king of England and of the ruler of India. He desired particularly to know how the Elchee had been treated in his dominions, and whether he liked what he had seen of Persia?

To all these questions appropriate answers were returned; and we left his majesty, after being seated about twenty minutes, very much gratified by our reception, and with an assurance from our Mehmandar†, which was afterwards confirmed by the prime minister, that the king of kings was highly pleased with the mission, the state and splendour of which he could not but feel added to his reputation, and gave him fame and popularity with his own subjects.

Several days passed before our second visit to

* Khoosh Amedee

† Futteh Ali Khan Nooree

court, when the Elchee carried the presents from the governor-general, some of which were very valuable, particularly the pier-glasses, which have been already mentioned. A change was made in this second visit; we were not stopped as before at the room, where we were met by Sûlimân Khan Kajir, that chief having failed in shewing the Elchee proper respect, by not rising when he went in or out of the apartment; and to prevent further disputes, the ceremony of stopping, in our progress towards the throne, was altogether dispensed with. The court was still more fully attended than before, and the king, if possible, more magnificently dressed.

After we had been seated a short time, the presents were announced. I was a little anxious when one of the ministers began to read the list. There had been a great desire to give them a name which denoted inferiority of rank on the part of the person from whom they were sent; but the Elchee would not allow of any such term being used, and he told the prime minister, that if any attempt of the kind were made, he would, notwithstanding the strict etiquette of the Persian court, instantly address the king, and tell him, that the presents he

brought were neither tribute nor offerings, as his secretary had from inadvertence called them, but rarities and curiosities sent from the British ruler of India, in token of his regard and friendship for the king of Persia. This communication had the desired effect; our presents were termed rarities, and the high rank of the governor general, as a person intrusted with sovereign functions, was on this occasion upheld.

This visit was at its commencement very formal, but the king, evidently desirous to give it another character, said to the Elchee, "I have heard a report which I cannot believe, that your king has only one wife." "No Christian prince can have more," said the Elchee "O, I know that! but he may have a little lady*." "Our gracious king, George the Third," replied the Envoy, "is an example to his subjects of attention to morality and religion in this respect, as in every other." "This may all be very proper," concluded his majesty of Persia, laughing, "but I certainly should not like to be king of such a country."

A curious incident occurred as we left the

* "Amma Keneesekee," the expression used by his majesty, means literally—But a little lady

palace. The king's giant, a man above eight feet high, and stout in proportion, was placed against one of the walls of the gate through which we were to retire, and he had in his hand a club of enormous dimensions. It was expected that the Elchee, on seeing him, would start with astonishment if not alarm, but he passed without taking any notice of this redoubtable personage, except by a slight glance. The fact was, as he afterwards confessed, it never entered into his imagination that it was a human being. Paintings of Roostem and his club (which the giant was dressed to imitate) are very common in Persia, and in the hurry of passing he took this to be one. He was first made sensible of his mistake by the praises of his Mehmandar. "Admirable!" said the latter to him: "nothing could be better the fools wished to try to startle you with giants and clubs stuck up against a wall. They are rightly served, your eye hardly rested on him for a moment, evidently not thinking him worthy of your notice. I shall tell them" (he added, with a feeling that showed he considered his honour was associated with that of the person of whom he had charge) "that such men are quite common in your

country, and that this giant would hardly be tall enough for one of the guards of the king of England."

Before we left Teheran the Envoy had several interviews with the king, at all of which his majesty was gracious, and at some which were private he spoke a great deal, and was very inquisitive into the habits and usages of England, and the character of its government.

Speaking of the empire of India, he asked, if it were true that ten ships were sent every year from that country to England loaded with gold and silver? The Elchee said it was very rare any bullion was sent from our territories in the East to England; that whatever went was in merchandize. "What a lie," said his majesty, "the Envoy* who preceded you told me, but," (seeing the Elchee annoyed), "do not vex yourself, it is not your shame but ours; your predecessor was a Persian, and we all exaggerate—you speak truth. But why did you send a Persian to my court? I suppose," continuing to answer himself, "it was to find out what kind

* Mehdee Ali Khan, a Persian gentleman, who had been deputed the year before to Persia by Mr Duncan, Governor of Bombay

of a being I was, and whether my country was settled, before you deputed one of your own nation"

"Are the French," he asked, "a powerful people?" "Certainly," replied the Envoy, "they would not otherwise deserve to be mentioned as the enemies of the English." "There again," said the king, turning to his ministers, "you know we were told that the French were a weak and contemptible nation, which was incredible: the Elchee, by telling the truth, has done them justice, and raised his own country at the same time."

After a number of questions on the mines of South America, and the arts and manufactures of Europe, the king said, "All this is astonishing! Persia has nothing but steel" "Steel well managed," said the Elchee, "has, from the beginning of the world to the present day, commanded all other riches." "Very true," said the king, quite pleased with this compliment, "that is a very just observation, therefore we must not complain, but continue to be contented, as our ancestors have been, with our swords and our lances."

The king had learned that the Elchee, in his

conversation with the minister, had displayed considerable acquaintance with the past history of his family at Asterabad, and his curiosity being excited, he sent to desire his attendance. We were received in a private apartment, in which there were only a few courtiers, but there were several Kajir chiefs, and four or five elders* of that tribe.

The interrogation began, and as the Elchee derived his knowledge from that minute and truth-telling traveller, Jonas Hanway, his answers quite surprised all present, and when he informed them, not only of the events which happened fifty-six † years before, but gave them accounts of the personal appearance, the dispositions, the connexions, and the characters of the different chiefs, the astonishment of the elders was expressed by the frequent repetition of "Yâ Ali," an ejaculation that, in the mouth of a Persian, attends all sudden emotions of wonder. The king was more than pleased, he was delighted, he evidently believed, from the Elchee's

* "Reesh-e-Seffeed,' literally gray-beard, is the Persian term for an elder

† Jonas Hanway was at Astrabad in 1744, during the rebellion of the ancestor of the present king

knowledge of the history of his family, that their fame had reached Europe, and that it was as well known to the nations of that quarter of the globe as to the Tûrkûmâns of Goorgân, or the natives of Mazenderan.

The Elchee on this occasion told the truth, but not the whole truth. The character of the court in which he was giving evidence did not perhaps require the latter, and it might have lessened the pleasure imparted, to have spoken of the plundered bales of cloth, and the dread of being made over to the Tûrkûmâns, which had so fixed the recollection of his majesty's family in the mind of poor Jonas Hanway As it was, the king was delighted, and conversed familiarly on various subjects Amongst others, he inquired very particularly into the frame of the English government

The Elchee explained it to him as well as he could. When he spoke of the liberty of the subject, his majesty was puzzled to understand what it meant; but on being told it implied, that no man was so high in England as to be able to do any thing contrary to the law of the land, and no man so low, but that he might do every thing not contrary to that law, he appeared

to comprehend this, as well as the other points which had been explained to him.

"I understand all you have said," he observed; and after some reflection, he added—"Your king is, I see, only the first magistrate * of the country." "Your majesty," said the Elchee, "has exactly defined his situation." "Such a condition of power," said he, smiling, "has permanence, but it has no enjoyment: mine is enjoyment. There you see Sûliman Khan Kajir, and several other of the first chiefs of the kingdom—I can cut all their heads off: can I not?" said he, addressing them. "Assuredly, 'Point of adoration of the world †,' if it is your pleasure."

"That is real power," said the king; "but then it has no permanence. When I am gone, my sons will fight for the crown, and all will be confusion: there is, however, one consolation, Persia will be governed by a soldier."

The king, at this visit, appeared in great good

* "Ket-khûdâ-e-avvel."

† "Kibla-e-Alem" is the universal term his subjects apply when speaking to the king of Persia. Kibla is the point to which Mahomedans turn when they pray. Alem signifies the world.

humour with the Elchee, and gratified the latter by showing him his richest jewels, amongst which was the "sea of light *," which is deemed one of the purest and most valuable diamonds in the world. Many of the others were surprisingly splendid.

On the evening after this visit, my excellent friend, whom I have before mentioned as preferring a shot at a duck to a view of the ruins of Persepolis, said he would like to be king of Persia. Knowing that inordinate ambition had no place in his mind, I asked him what he would do if he attained that station · "Run away with my crown," was the prompt answer We had a hearty laugh at the genuine simplicity of this expression. It is perhaps the first time sovereignty was ever desired for such a purpose , but, considering all that attends, in Persia, the wearing of the article he wished for, it would perhaps

* The Deriâ-e-Noor, or sea of light, weighs 186 carats, and is considered to be the diamond of the finest lustre in the world The Taj-e-Mâh, or crown of the moon," is also a splendid diamond, it weighs 146 carats These two are the principal in a pair of bracelets, valued at near a million sterling Those in the crown are also of extraordinary size and value

be the best mode of converting to real advantage so dangerous and precarious a possession.

The condition of Fatteh Ali Shâh, at the time I first saw him, was deemed, by his Mahomedan subjects, as fortunate as could be attained by any human being in this world He added to youth and personal endowments, four wives, more ladies than I will venture to name, and nearly one hundred children, the possession of a splendid throne, and the prospect of living long to enjoy it, for his cruel but able uncle, Aga Mahomed, had destroyed all who were likely to dispute his possession of the crown. "He had," to use his own words, "raised a royal palace, and cemented it with blood, that the boy Bâbâ Khan (the name he always gave his nephew) might sleep within its walls in peace."

The king has elegant manners and many accomplishments. Among others, he is a poet, and has written a book of odes, of the merits of which the critics of Persia speak in perfect raptures. I only wish I had the same power that he possesses of disarming severity and propitiating favour. What a magnifying glass would then be applied to these pages, now doomed, I fear, to be viewed through a reversed telescope,

which will make them appear so diminutive as hardly to be worth the trouble of perusing. But to return to his majesty of Persia.

I made all the inquiries I could into his usual habits and mode of passing his time. He is very regular in the execution of his public duties, and being a king of Persia is no sinecure He must have two courts every day; one public, and another private He receives at the first the salutations of all his sons, nobles, ministers, and public officers, and at this public levee strangers are presented. At the second, in which his ministers and favourites only attend, business is transacted.

The present king, like many of the same age and temperament, makes up, by the employment of his leisure moments, for the forms and restraints which usage imposes upon him when before the eye of the public He pursues with great ardour the sports of the field, is an excellent horseman, and a good shot.

Being fond of his fame as a literary man, he devotes some time to the society of the learned, and enjoys hearing poetry and entertaining stories recited. He has, however, I am told, more boyish amusements, in which those of his

favourite attendants and domestics, who join, are admitted to great familiarity The age and character of Hajee Ibrahim have naturally inspired the king with some awe, and it is not an uncommon joke, when his majesty is at high romps, for some privileged person to exclaim, "Hajee! Hajee!" as if the minister were seen approaching: the word is certain to act as a talisman, all are grave and in their places in a moment, till a laugh from the successful wit proclaims that it is only a jest.

I had an opportunity of observing that the king is very fond of having a laugh at the expense of his gravest ministers and highest nobles; and Hajee Ibrahim assured me, he had never seen him more delighted than by the opportunity of indulging in this vein, afforded by two occurrences connected with our party.

Sûlimân Khan Kajir, of whose unbending dignity I have already spoken, feeling himself unwell, sent to request that the surgeon of the English mission might attend him. That gentleman went; but as he could not speak Persian, he was accompanied by the relation of the Elchee before noticed. This cherished friend of mine (who is now, alas! no more) was, from his knowledge

of the language and his pleasing manners, a general favourite at court, and was distinguished by the Mahomedan appellation of Feiz-Ali, which had been given from its resemblance, in their ears, to his English name The Persian chief received and treated him and the doctor with such repulsive coldness and pride, that when he desired a second visit they were unwilling to return, but the Elchee, anxious to pay every attention to so near a relation of the king, insisted upon their going. Their reception this time was exactly opposite to what it was before Sûlimân Khan insisted upon their sitting near him, treated them with sweetmeats and coffee, and laughed at the doctor, whom he desired to cure a bad eye he had with the touch of his finger, and on his being answered with a declaration of inability, said he was rejoiced to find that European physicians had not that magical power with which his countrymen in their ignorance vested them.

The two gentlemen returned just as we were on the point of sitting down to dinner with Hajee Ibrahim. "Well," said the minister, addressing the Elchee's relation, "how did you find Sûlimân Khan?" All that had passed

was repeated —"Why," said the Hajee, "the Khan must have been drunk." "Very possibly," replied my friend, "all I can say is, he was very polite and very pleasant, and I regret much that he was not drunk at the first visit we paid him."

The Hajee was highly diverted with this reply, which he repeated to the king the same evening, and we learnt that his majesty next day rallied his relation with great effect, telling him Feiz-Ali had said he was "a pleasant companion, and a very polite gentleman, when he was drunk!"

The other occurrence occasioned still more mirth to the "king of kings" A number of the first nobles and ministers solicited, and were permitted, to give dinners to the Elchee. Amongst these was a near relation of his majesty, called Mahomed Hoosein Khan. It was expected that this nobleman would visit the Elchee, but he did not pay this mark of respect. The consequence was, the Elchee wrote to decline the honour of waiting upon him. This caused the greatest confusion: Hajee Ibrahim was sent for several times by the king, and at last brought a message, inti-

mating, that if the Elchee would give way on this occasion, his majesty would deem it a personal favour, and would take care he should never again be placed in such a situation. The Hajee added his own entreaties, saying, "If you do not go, the indignity put upon this proud Kajir chief will be exclusively ascribed to my advice." Consideration for the minister weighed more with the Elchee than all other motives, and he agreed to recall his excuse, stating, that he did so at the express desire of the king

The Elchee, when he entered the dinner apartment, though he must have known his host by the dignified distance at which he sat from his guests, nevertheless, choosing to mark the absurdity of going to dine with a man with whose person he was unacquainted, turned to the Mehmandar, and said, "Which of these Omrahs is Mahomed Hoosein Khan Doodâkee?" The poor Mehmandar was so confounded that he could only answer by pointing to the personage inquired after, who now advanced with an air of offended pride, while the whole assembly looked astounded.

Notwithstanding this bad beginning, the

party went off very well, chiefly owing to the pleasant manners and information of the minister, Rizâ Koolee Khan, who exerted himself not a little to promote good humour

We were not aware, till we returned home, of one cause of the surprise which the interrogation, addressed to the Mehmandar, had occasioned The Elchee, who understood Persian, was wholly ignorant of Turkish, and consequently did not know that the title of Doodâkee, which he gave to his host, from having heard him so called, was not one of honour, but a nickname, signifying "Thick-lip," which he had received from the conformation of that feature, and which was useful in distinguishing him from a hundred other Mahomed Hoosein Khans belonging to the Turkish tribe of Kajir.

The king, we were informed, was delighted with this story, and used sometime afterward, when our host was standing amongst other chiefs near the throne, to exclaim, "Which of all these Omrahs is Mahomed Hoosein Khan Doodâkee?"

The king, passes some hours of every day in the seraglio, or ladies' apartments. If the character of my little work permitted, I could

here give the rein to my imagination, and create scenes, which however unreal might still please and interest many of my readers. I could paint Circassians and Georgians of surpassing beauty—clothe them in robes and jewels of unparalleled splendour—give to some the fond but unavailing regrets of past but not forgotten early attachments—and to others the pangs of jealousy, and a torturing sense of love changed for neglect. I could devise well-planned intrigues, hair-breadth escapes, and hint at murders committed, where no eye could see, and no tongue could tell the tale of horror; but all these exciting subjects are forbidden me, by a stupid rule I have laid down, which compels me, in all that I personally relate, to limit myself to facts.

From what I have heard of the seraglio of the King of Persia, many forms observed in it are the same as in the outer apartments.

The king, like all good Mahomedans, rises early, as the first prayer must be said at dawn of day; he is aided in his toilette by female attendants. After he is dressed he holds a levee, at which more than three hundred ladies of different ranks are present: each, according

to her rank or favour, standing nearer or farther from the throne. Two only, I am informed, have the privilege of being seated, the mother of the heir-apparent, and the daughter of Ibrahim Khan of Sheesha.

There are in the seraglio female officers of every description. A Lady of Requests, a Lady of the Ceremonies, and my Lady Chief Constable One duty of the first is to introduce the young strangers to the notice of their lord and sovereign, the second marshals all in their station, according to their dignity or consideration; and the third is armed with *an authority which, if fame speaks true, is not* unfrequently called into action.

The influence of many of the ladies is very great. The mothers of the princes who are employed in distant provinces usually accompany their sons, and contrive, by intrigue, to preserve that power which their charms once gave them: almost all these pay the king annual visits.

There are bands of singers and dancers, drolls and mimics, within the walls of the inner apartments, who contribute both to his majesty's amusement and that of his ladies.

There are also females who traffic in different wares, and many of these have the privilege of going out and coming in at pleasure.

The King of Persia can only, according to law, marry four wives . these are selected from considerations of policy, not of affection. They are upon a very different footing from any of the other ladies in the seraglio ; they have separate establishments, and are always objects of attention and respect, though seldom perhaps of affection. But real love can hardly be imagined to have ever found a dwelling amid such scenes as have been described , yet I was told a short but affecting tale, with so many circumstances to confirm its truth, that I could hardly doubt but the king of kings once knew the meaning of this sacred word.

A young dancing-girl from Shiraz, named Tootee*, was raised from her humble rank to a place in the royal seraglio. Tootee, who from her profession must in her earliest years have been seen by many, is said to have been of an elegant and delicate form, with a fine

* "Tootee" is the Persian word for a parrot, a bird which is prominent in Persian tales for its knowledge and habits of attachment

voice, and a face that indicated feeling and intelligence. She gained the heart of her royal lover, and, according to fame, gave him all her own in return. While she lived, others were neglected, but this fair flower soon drooped and died. The grief of the king was excessive. He directed her to be interred near the shrine of the holy Shâh Abd-ool-Azeem, which is within five miles of the capital. His visits to this shrine have, since this event, become much more frequent than before; whether they are from respect to the remains of the saint, or from fond regret of his beloved Tootee, cannot be determined, but he is often observed to sit upon her tomb, in the apparent enjoyment of a melancholy pleasure.

Notwithstanding the habits of his condition, and the severe and cruel acts to which that has often led him, there is naturally a kind disposition in the present king of Persia, which has made me always regard him as deserving of estimation, and I cannot but take an interest in all that personally concerns him.

It is from such feelings that the short history and fate of Tootee have ever interested me. I have been gratified to think, that the mind of

one I desired to hold in regard was not so completely corrupted and polluted by sensual indulgence and luxury, as to be a stranger to a passion which, in any shape that approaches to purity, softens and ennobles man, far beyond all other sentiments that are associated with his happiness in this world.

The king leaves his inner apartments at eight o'clock An hour or two before breakfast is passed with his favourite companions, of whom Mahomed Hoosein Khan Mervee is, as he merits to be, the most distinguished, both from his rank and superior qualities

The breakfast for his majesty is served in great state, and the dishes are of pure gold this meal is usually at ten in the morning, and dinner at eight in the evening.

The trays which contain the royal meals are sealed up by the head of the household, an office of great trust, and while this precaution is taken against poison, a physician attends lest the royal appetite should be indulged to an excess that might injure health. I fear, however, this wise man is not so successful in enforcing abstemiousness as he who watched over the renowned sovereign of Barrataria!

No person is allowed to eat with the king, but he has generally one or two of his youngest sons near him, to whom he gives of the dishes which he thinks they like best, he also, at times, as a mark of great favour, sends victuals dressed for himself to others. The Elchee was often honoured with presents of bread, rice, and pillaw. These specimens of culinary art satisfied me, that his majesty's cooks merited all the praises I had heard bestowed on them.

When the first mission took its departure from Teheran, the king was most gracious. We all received fine dresses from his majesty, that given to the Elchee was most splendid, and he had besides a handsome horse, and a dagger richly set with jewels. There was much anxiety that he should dress in these robes, but though he expressed himself willing to wear any of them which could be put over his own clothes, he could not, he said, put off any part of his uniform. The king, very good-humouredly, alluded to his tenacity in this particular, at our last visit. —"You were unjust to your own appearance, Elchee," said he, "had you put on the cap I sent, you would have looked one of the tallest men in Persia."

The leave we took of Hajee Ibrahim was marked by some circumstances which made it truly affecting. This extraordinary man had become very intimate with the Elchee, to whom he communicated his anticipation of being soon put to death. "The king and his ministers," said he, "are all anxious to destroy me. Your arrival has delayed for a time the execution of their designs, but it is only for a short period. I could easily save myself, but Persia would again be plunged in warfare. My object," he continued, "has been to give my country one king, I cared not whether he was a Zend or a Kajir, so that there was an end of internal distraction. I have seen enough of these scenes of blood; I will be concerned in no more of them. I hope I have made my peace with God, and shall therefore die contented."

The Elchee, who had succeeded in effecting an outward reconciliation between Hajee Ibrahim and the other ministers, Meerzâ Seffee and Meerzâ Rizâ Koolee, took this opportunity of beseeching his friend to treat these personages with more consideration and respect. He also earnestly exhorted him to bear with more temper than he did the occasional fits of ill-humour and violence of the king

"I cannot alter my nature," said the Hajee; "it is plain and downright. besides, the conduct you recommend would be of no use, it would only precipitate my fate The fears of my enemies would lead them to conclude that it covered some deep design."

This conversation passed two days before our departure, and the day on which it occurred the Hajee appeared very melancholy. The Elchee had been in the habit of taking great notice of, and playing with, the minister's youngest son, a fine boy of five years of age The child, who was well trained in Persian etiquette, had remained quiet till he saw the Elchee move towards the door, he then ran after him, and in trying to lay hold of his clothes, fell on his face, and burst into tears The Hajee, forgetting all forms in parental feeling, ran forward also, and taking his son in his arms, said—"Thou hast a heart, my child! thou hast a heart*, but God," said he, in a lower tone, to the Elchee, "has informed him he is soon to lose his father, and taught him where to look for a friend."

The anticipations of the minister proved just.

* Dil darēe tifl, dil dâree

though his fate was delayed for two years, chiefly from the influence of the king's mother, who well knew the value of such a servant as Hajee Ibrahim Her death left the field open to his enemies, who fabricated every accusation that could work upon either the pride or fears of the king, to make him destroy one whom they at once dreaded and hated. Their arts were but too successful, and the high and disdainful manner in which this truly great man repelled the charges brought against him caused his being put to a cruel death His brothers and sons were, according to the barbarous usage of Persia, included in his sentence. These, though residing in different parts of the kingdom, were all seized (so well arranged was the plan) on the same day, and the same hour Some were put to death, others lost their eyes, all their property was confiscated. Indeed the plunder of the accumulated wealth of the family who had so long enjoyed power probably tended, with other motives, in producing this melancholy termination to its fame and fortune

It is stated that though the king endeavours to persuade himself Hajee Ibrahim meant to rebel, and that his throne was endangered by

the existence of this powerful subject, he is often visited with remorse at his own conduct towards him. On occasions of emergency to the state he has been frequently known to reproach his present ministers with the loss to Persia, which their arts and jealousies had caused, exclaiming, "Where is Hajee Ibrahim? he alone was fit to give counsel to a monarch"

It may perhaps be received as a proof of the king's sentiments upon this subject, that, being aware of the affecting scene which had taken place with the youngest son of Hajee Ibrahim on the Elchee's leaving Teheran in 1800, he directed, on his second mission to Persia, that the sightless youth, who had enjoyed such favour as a child, might meet us on our advance, and receive, as he did in the notice and sympathy of his early friend, all the consolation which could be administered to one in his melancholy condition.

CHAPTER XIX

PROGRESS OF THE RUSSIANS—BUONAPARTE—SECOND VISIT TO TULLANEA—KING ABBAS MEERZA — REFLECTIONS — ELECTRIFYING MACHINE — PHANTASMAGORIA—MINISTERS OF THE PERSIAN COURT—MAHOMED HOOSEIN KHAN MERVEE.

TEN years had elapsed since my first visit to the court of Persia, and many changes had occurred, both in men and measures. The Russians, within this short period, had advanced their frontier from the north of the Caucasus to the banks of the Araxes, a space of above four hundred miles Buonaparte had laid his plans for chaining the bear of Russia, and the lion of Persia, with the design of harnessing them to his war-chariot, that he might drive in triumph over the rich plains of India His name was familiar to numbers in Persia, and some few understood the character of his power Among these was my shrewd old friend Aga Mahomed

Câsim-Wâlâ *, of Isfahan, who is at once a professor, a poet, a philosopher, and a very inquisitive politician. "This Buonaparte," said he to me one morning, when I paid him a visit in his apartment at the college, "is a wonderful man, he wields empires as if they were clubs. After he has settled with Turkey, he will, unless our king shapes his policy to his liking, give Persia a knock on the head with Russia, and then make use of both to overthrow your power in India Happen what will," said old Aga Mahomed, "he is a magnificent fellow, a perfect Faringee † Chenghiz Khan"

* My old friend Câsim-Wâlâ died about five years after this interview Among other occupations of his latter years was that of preparing for himself a place of interment in the Chehâr-Bâgh of Isfahan He built a small but handsome mausoleum, with a tomb in the centre, for the top of which a fine marble slab was obtained from Yezd, and he not only wrote his own epitaph on this stone, but had it engraved, and every way finished, with the exception of the date of his death Near the mausoleum he made a fountain and flower garden, with bowers and seats; and a gentleman who saw him a short time before he died tells me this spot became his favourite resort, where he delighted to receive and converse with his friends and disciples.

† Faringee, as has been before remarked, implies European

I am treading on forbidden ground, I have nothing to say to politics · if I had, this chapter might be more amusing I could tell of French and English schemes for harlequin-changes, which were to leave my Persian friends no remains of barbarism but their beards! of Mahomedan princes trained to be reformers, of the sudden introduction of the fine arts, and of the roving tribes of Tartary, and the wild mountaineers of Fars, becoming, by the proper use of a few cabalistical phrases, disciplined regiments. These and many similar transformations were meant to prove that we lived in an age when any instructed or enlightened man might, if furnished with the necessary implements of pen, ink, and paper, effect any given change, on any given nation, in a few months.

This was not the first time that such experiments had been tried in Persia, for, besides a knowledge of the civil and military arts of Europe, efforts had been made to teach the Seffavean monarchs and their nobles to understand the laws, institutions, and governments of the more civilized world. The sarcastic and penetrating Gibbon, when speaking of the attempt, observes, " Chardin says that European travellers have

diffused among the Persians some ideas of the freedom and mildness of our governments: they have done them a very ill office." This may be too severe, but if instruction is of a character to diminish happiness, without furthering improvement, he would be bold who should call it a blessing. A medicine may be excellent in itself, yet, from the peculiar habits and constitution of the patient, it may act as a poison. These and many similar sentences of wisdom I have now and then uttered, when talking about the proposed sudden regeneration of the Eastern world, but I never could obtain a hearing. My plans of slow and almost imperceptible change, which were not confined to the teaching half a dozen individuals, but embraced a whole people in their operation, have been ridiculed as proving nothing but the sluggishness of my understanding. When I have pleaded experience, I have been accused of giving that name to prejudice; my toleration of systems out of my power to alter, and interwoven with every feeling, habit and enjoyment of the communities in which they prevail, has been referred to my narrow views; and all my pretensions to discernment and judgment have been called in question because I have

persuaded myself, and tried to persuade others, that Asiatics, though they are not so fair as we are, though they are of a different religion, speak a different language, and have neither made the same advances in science nor in civilization, are, notwithstanding these disadvantages, not altogether destitute of good and great qualities, both of head and heart

Liable as I am to such accusations, I must cautiously limit myself to facts, which I know from observation, or have heard from persons worthy of credit, but should my reader detect me in the sin of taking a more favourable view of human nature than it merits, I shall hope to be forgiven, while I pray that the stranger, who visits the land of my nativity, may come to it with a mind disposed rather to dwell on its green and fertile valleys, than upon its rugged rocks and bleak mountains. May he find enough of sound and good feeling among its inhabitants to make him look with indulgence on their failings and excesses. If he quarrels with that luxury and refinement, which, by supplying, multiply the wants of men, if he doubts the good of many of the laws and institutions which belong to an artificial society, the frame and

workings of which the labour of a life would not enable him to comprehend, may he contemplate it in a spirit of humility, which rather leads him to question the correctness of his own judgment, than to pronounce, on a superficial glance, that every thing is wrong, which does not accord with his own habits and feelings.

When the second mission reached his court, the King of Persia was encamped at his summer quarters of Sooltaneah, an extensive plain, whose elevation gives it a pleasant temperature during the hot season. The Elchee was welcomed, on his approach to the camp, by his old friend Nou Rôz Khan, whose personal appearance was unchanged by the ten years which had intervened since our last meeting His manner, as usual, was cordial and frank, and he seemed particularly delighted to inform the Elchee of the king's continued favour. "His Majesty," said Nou Ròz Khan, "desires me to say that he will be delighted to see you, and bids me assure you, that if you have met with any obstacles or difficulties * on this mission, they have not been occasioned by him."

* This observation alluded to some embarrassments that had arisen in consequence of two British envoys, one from

The ceremonies of our approach to court, and of our visit to the king, prince, and ministers, were exactly the same as on the first mission The king was, if possible, more friendly and gracious. Among other proofs of personal favour, he insisted on bestowing a distinguished mark of his regard on the Elchee, and the order of the Lion and Sun (the arms of Persia) was created * for that purpose. The investiture of this order took place on our visit of leave. Dresses of honour were sent for the Elchee and

England, and the other India, meeting at the court of Persia.

* Nothing can be more curious than the fact of Mahomedan princes creating honours of knighthood to confer distinction on Christians The usage commenced with the court of Constantinople, and was followed by that of Teheran The king of Persia created the order of the Sun for General Gardanne, the ambassador from Buonaparte This order was offered to Sir Harford Jones, envoy from the king of England, but was declined on account of the circumstances attending its origin It was subsequently pressed upon the acceptance of the Elchee, but he deemed it proper to follow the example of the envoy of the king of England The king of Persia determined, however, as he said, that his first European friend should wear an order of his creation, and instituted that of the Lion and Sun, which have been from very ancient times the arms of Persia

his suite When we came to the tent at the entrance into the king's pavilion, we were met by one of the chief ministers, and a fermân or royal mandate was read, conferring on the Elchee the title of Khan or Lord, with the rank of Sipâh-Silâr or General This fermân was then placed in his hat, it being the custom for a Persian noble, on receiving any honorary title from his king, to wear the patent of creation in his cap when he goes to court to return thanks. After we were seated, his majesty congratulated the Elchee on his accession of rank. "When you came here first," he said, "you were a Captain, you are now a General in your own country, I have made you a Khan and Sipâh-Silâr in mine At your next visit, which must be soon, I shall expect you to be a Fermân-Fermâee or Ruler, but approach nearer"

The Elchee rose, and went up to the throne, on which the king was seated, and his majesty, taking up a diamond-star, began to pin it on the Elchee's coat. It was evidently the first time the royal hands had been so employed. "The king"—a title by which he often speaks of himself—"the king," said he, "does not understand this kind of business," and he laughed heartily

at his own awkwardness However, he would not allow any one to help him, and having at length accomplished the task, he again congratulated the Elchee, saying, "You are now confirmed in my service, I can show no higher favour than this, and that star on your breast will convince all the world of the regard in which the king holds you"

Nothing was wanting to render this farewell-audience kind and gracious. His majesty, on our rising to take leave, expressed his hope of seeing the Elchee again, saying, "Every second has a third*," and when we were fifty yards from the throne, and making our last bow, departing from all usage, he exclaimed, in a loud voice, to the Elchee, "Once more may God preserve you" The courtiers looked amazed at this deviation from established form, and the prime minister told the Elchee he ought to value it far beyond all the honours conferred upon him

Enough has been said of the king it remains to speak of the heir-apparent I one day accompanied the Elchee to a review of some regular

* The number three is deemed fortunate in Persia as elsewhere

infantry, to which Abbas Meerzâ had invited him, and at which his highness commanded in person, and put the troops through all their manœuvres. When this review was over, he requested to see the Elchee's escort, consisting of a select party of English dragoons, some native cavalry from India, and a brigade of horse-artillery. He expressed great admiration of the manner in which this small body went through their evolutions, and said, with such models he trusted soon to have a fine army. This hope the Elchee's answer did not encourage. On a subsequent visit to the prince the topic was renewed, and I was somewhat surprised to find the Elchee so little of a courtier as to express the same sentiments to a prince, whose ears, it was evident, had long been soothed by far different language. Abbas Meerzâ listened with great patience, but his uneasy feelings were evident. "Why, from what you state," he observed, with much emotion, "I shall be an old man before I can make any progress with my present plans, and after all they are likely to come to nothing" The Elchee said he was bound by his regard for his highness to speak the truth. "I am much obliged to you (an-

swered the prince), you think, I perceive, that the irregular horse of Persia are the best defence of our country; but they can never do what regular troops and cannon can." "But they can do much that regular troops and cannon cannot," replied the Elchee. "That is true," said the prince; and here ended the conversation Neither party seemed convinced, Abbas Meerzâ continuing firm in his resolution to follow up his plans of improvement, and the Elchee appearing equally satisfied that these plans were nowise suited either to the present condition of Persia, or the character of its people

Abbas Meerzâ was, at this time, a young prince of engaging manners, handsome in person, and gifted with quickness and discernment. Owing to his intercourse with Europeans, he had thrown off many of those habits of state and ceremony which are so punctiliously observed by persons of high rank in Persia. He was now exercising his battalions, and he rode along the lines without an attendant After the review, seeing the Elchee's curricle with a pair of fine Arab horses, he desired to have a drive. It was the first carriage of the kind he had ever been in, and he was quite delighted.

As the horses trotted along the road to Teheran, he ordered his attendants to return. "Go," said he, laughing, "and tell my father I am on my way to his capital with the Elchee"

The curricle which had so delighted the prince was afterwards given to the king, who was equally pleased with it, and still more with the rapid movements and quick firing of two pieces of horse-artillery, which were presented to him. "These," he said, "will destroy all my enemies." The Elchee stated that what he had brought were only models, which the ingenuity of his majesty's subjects would soon copy, and suggested that it would be necessary to make roads for wheel carriages, and roads, he added, if generally introduced, would be found alike useful for pleasure, for commerce, and for war.

The wisdom which prompted this advice was lauded to the skies. Roads were admitted to be a great and obvious improvement, at once ornamental and profitable to Persia. Plans for making and keeping them in repair were required and furnished. The royal mandate, the Elchee was told, should be issued immediately: and he was much pleased at the thought of

having given rise to a measure so good, and which he considered as preparing the way for the permanent improvement of the country. But, aware of the difficulties likely to obstruct the plan, he begged the minister of finance, Ameen-ood-Douleh, to confine the first attempt to the communication between Sooltaneah, Teheran, and Tebreez, and advised that the results of this experiment should determine the further prosecution of the scheme.

The minister of finance, who was as remarkable for his plain manners as for his plain sense, acknowledged the justice of this suggestion. "But you know Persia," was his concluding significant remark, which sufficiently informed the Elchee that his project of road-making, however easy of execution, from the nature of the country and climate, would share the fate of other schemes, which it was then the fashion at the court of Persia to adopt, commence, and abandon. These highways required labour, which labour, political economists would have told the king, must be paid for by money, by provisions, or by the remission of other exactions. But this information would have been of little benefit, for I never knew a man, who,

with all his good qualities, would listen with so little patience to political economists, as the king of kings, Fatteh Ali Shah; for that monarch, besides the habits and prejudices of his condition, has personally an insurmountable objection to all measures which include disbursement.

Time may do much with my Persian friends, but we must not expect to hurry that tardy-paced worker of miracles. We may inspire a few with that thirst for real glory, which desires to create, not to destroy, others may be instructed in science, but even in those whom we may elevate above their countrymen, early habits and national prejudices will still be too strong for us Their speeches and their writings may exhibit enlightened minds, but their actions will follow their established usages and ordinary habits; and their conduct will too often be what it was formerly Like the lady-cat in the fable, they will be apt to spring from the board, we have spread for them, whenever a mouse shows itself.

When the first Mission was at Teheran, we found a chief there, called Ali Mahomed Khan, who had been compelled, by some political re-

volutions, to quit Cabool, and take refuge in Persia. He was a man of rank, and had been received and treated with hospitality and distinction by the king, who signified to the Elchee his wish, that he should take this nobleman to India, whither he was desirous of going. This request was the more readily complied with, as the Elchee had found Ali Mahomed a pleasant and apparently a sensible man. I became very intimate with him, and when we arrived at Calcutta, I took great pleasure in showing him that splendid capital of the British dominions in the East. I pointed out the crowded shipping in its noble river, the elegant streets thronged with carriages, the newly-erected palace of its Ruler; its college, the magnificent abodes of public officers and wealthy merchants; all, in short, that could impress him with an idea of the happy results of civilization.

Seeing my friend quite delighted with the contemplation of this rich scene, I asked him, with some exultation, what he thought of it? "A wonderful place to plunder*!" was his reply; and his eyes glistened, as he made it, with anticipated enjoyment

* "Ajeb jâhee berâee chappau!" literally a wonderful place for a foray!

I mentioned this anecdote to my Christian friend, Khojah Arratoon, our treasurer. "Ay ay," said the old man, "nature will come out What you have related verifies our Armenian proverb · they were preaching the Gospel over the head of a wolf—'Stop!' said he, 'I see a flock of sheep passing'"

I do not mean, in what I have here said, to condemn national efforts to spread knowledge, nor to deny that such endeavours may in due season produce happy effects, but such results will be retarded, not accelerated, by all attempts at rapid and premature changes In endeavouring to effect these, we are often as absurd in our admiration of individuals, to whom a few of our own favourite lights have been imparted, as in our condemnation of those, whom we conceive to remain in their primitive darkness We altogether forget that it is from the general condition of the country that the character of the population is chiefly formed Hereditary and undisputed succession to the throne, though it may not diminish the frequency of foreign wars, nor prevent the shedding of human blood, gives an internal security, which leads to the introduction of a system that enables such a state to have efficient and permanent civil and

military establishments, and it also gives, to a great proportion of its subjects, a valuable leisure to pursue science and literature, which gradually lead to further improvements in society But in countries like Persia all government is personal, institutions and establishments rise and fall with the caprice of a sovereign, and supposing him steady in his objects, still the probability is, that they prosper and die with their founder, and while their basis is so unstable, and their duration so uncertain, they cannot be permanently efficient or useful

Revolutions of such a nature as we desire will work themselves into form, when time changes men's sentiments, and ripens a nation for them, but we too often, in the foolish pride of our knowledge, rush towards the end, with little or no consideration about the means In our precocious plans, we cast the blame from that, on which it ought to rest, upon those we desire to reform Because men continue, like their ancestors, to live under an arbitrary monarch, and have not the precise qualities upon which we value ourselves, we hasten to the conclusion that they are slaves and barbarians, whom the force of habit and prejudice alone saves from being as

miserable as they are degraded. Viewing them in this light, we waste a pity upon them, which they neither value nor understand; nor has it, if we analyze its grounds, any just foundation Though unacquainted with political freedom, though superficial in science, and unlearned in Greek or Latin, they are not without defences against injustice or despotism, and the very condition of their society gives them, on all points affecting themselves, their families or friends, an intuitive quickness and clearness of perception, which appears wonderful to men rendered dull, as it were, by civilization. Neither are such nations deficient in those arts, which are subservient to the subsistence, and promote the enjoyments of man, and they are perhaps more alive than we improved beings to those passions whence so much of our happiness and misery flow

I have travelled much, but have found little difference in the aggregate of human felicity. My pride and patriotism have often been flattered by the complaints, and comparisons of the discontented; but I have never met any considerable number of a tribe or nation, who would have exchanged their condition for that of any

other people upon the earth. When I have succeeded, as I often did, in raising admiration and envy, by dwelling upon the advantages of the British government, I have invariably found that these feelings vanished, when I explained more specifically the sacrifices of personal liberty, the restraints of the law, and the burden of taxation, by which these advantages are purchased It was the old story of the Arab nurse, who could not endure England because there were no date trees , and the King of Persia, who, though feeling all the insecurity of his own crown, could not for a moment tolerate the thoughts of wearing that of England, which would have reduced him to only one wife !

Such observations should have made me humble , but they did not I continued to value myself on my superiority , and when in Persia, was as eager as any of our party to parade my knowledge, particularly in science (which, by-the-by, was my weak point), and to enjoy the wonder which its display produced.

One of the chief means of astonishing our Persian friends, on the first Mission, was an electrifying machine, with the effects of which

we surprised and alarmed all, from majesty itself to the lowest peasant

When it was exhibiting at Shiraz for the gratification of Cherâgh Ali Khan, who had come to pay the Elchee a visit, this formal minister expressed himself satisfied with the sparks he saw elicited, and the slight shocks which were given to others. He declined receiving one himself, though he expressed a conviction that he was above being startled, like those upon whom he had seen the experiment tried This great man, having very condescendingly taken a walk into the garden to give his attendants an opportunity of seeing the effects of the wonderful machine, returned while they were encircling the operator (our doctor) and holding each other's hands in expectation of the shock It is, in Persia, deemed very indecorous for any one to have his back turned when a man of rank enters the apartment, but for domestics to behave in this manner is an almost inexpiable offence. The good people of whom I speak were, however, in too breathless a state of expectation to observe the approach of their lord, who, enraged by this apparent rudeness, seized, with a most

indignant air, the shoulder of one of them to take him to task. At this moment, whether by accident or design has never yet been discovered, the shock was given. Each quitted the hold of his neighbour, and started back, while Cheragh Ali Khan, who felt it the more from its being unexpected, staggered against the wall, and looked the very picture of terror

The Elchee, who had entered the room with him, could not repress his mirth This was the signal for all, and even the lowest of the domestics went away tittering at what had befallen their magnificent master, who, after a short pause, during which dignity had a struggle with good sense, allowed the latter to gain the victory, and laughed like others at what had occurred

At Isfahan all were delighted with the electric machine, except one renowned doctor and lecturer of the college, who, envious of the popularity gained by this display of our superior science, contended publicly, that the effects produced were moral, not physical—that it was the mummery we practised, and the state of nervous agitation we excited, which produced an ideal shock, but he expressed his conviction, that a

man of true firmness of mind would stand unmoved by all we could produce out of our glass-bottle, as he scoffingly termed our machine. He was invited to the experiment, and declared his readiness to attend at the next visit the Begler-Beg paid the Elchee.

The day appointed soon arrived The Begler-Beg came with a numerous retinue, and amongst others the doctor, whom we used to call, "Red Stockings," from his usually wearing scarlet hose. He was, we found, notwithstanding his learning and reputed science, often made an object of mirth in the circles of the great and wealthy at Isfahan, to whom he furnished constant matter of amusement, from the pertinacity with which he maintained his dogmas. He had nearly, we were told, lost his life the year before, by marching up to a large buck-antelope, which was known to be vicious, but which, according to the theory of the philosopher, was to be overawed by the erect dignity of man, provided he was fearlessly approached The consequence of this experiment was different from what the theorist expected. The wild animal very unceremoniously butted the doctor into a deep dry ditch in the field where

he was grazing, and the learned man was confined to his bed nearly three months, during which, he had ample time to consider the causes of this unlooked-for effect

Though the above and similar instances might afford reason for concluding, that Red Stockings, with all his philosophy, was not overwise, I discovered that he maintained his ground in the first society, by means common in Persia as in other countries. He was, in fact, "A little* of the fool, and not too much of the honest" This impression of his character, combined with his presumption, made us less scrupulous in our preparations to render him an example for all who might hereafter doubt the effects of our boasted electricity, and indeed our Persian visitors seemed anxious that the effect should be such as to satisfy the man who had dared us to the trial, that it was physical, not moral

The philosopher, notwithstanding various warnings, came boldly up, took hold of the chain with both hands, planted his feet firmly, shut his teeth, and evidently called forth all his resolution to resist the shock It was given, and

* '*Poco di matto*' is deemed by the Italians an essential quality in a great man's companion

poor Red Stockings dropt on the floor as if he had been shot. There was a momentary alarm, but on his almost instant recovery, and the Elchee explaining that the effect had been increased by the determination to resist it, all gave way to one burst of laughter The good natured philosopher took no offence. He muttered something about the re-action of the feelings after being overstrained, but admitted there was more in the glass bottle than he had anticipated.

As the Persians had become acquainted with electrical machines, by their increased intercourse with Europeans, the Elchee, when on his second Mission, did not choose again to trust to one of them for the entertainment of his friends. He purchased, therefore, for this purpose, a large and excellent phantasmagoria, which was furnished with numerous glasses, on these were painted spectres, with shapes monstrous, beyond what the poet's fancy ever bodied forth.

With our phantasmagoria, old and young, rich and poor, were in raptures The prince at Shiraz was the first person of royal blood to whom it was exhibited, and he declared his wonder and delight at this extraordinary invention.

Persons were instructed to exhibit it to his ladies, who, we learned, were enchanted with its effects; and his mother*, an able princess, who had long exercised supreme authority over him and the province of Fars, declared herself gratified beyond measure at the wonders she had seen.

What rendered the phantasmagoria more attractive, was the ingenuity and talent of a young man† from India, who had charge of it. Besides being an adept in exhibiting it, he made frames, and painted, as occasion required, the glass he placed in them, with all kinds of Persian figures; and part of the story told in the day was sometimes exhibited at the Elchee's evening entertainments, which were often attended by dignified persons, who had before withheld their presence from regard to punctilious ceremony, but could not resist their curiosity. Thus our phantasmagoria became an important implement of diplomacy.

The Prince of Persia was anxious to possess this treasure, but as its fame had preceded the

* This remarkable lady, who for a long period might be said to govern Fars, died three years ago of the cholera.

† Mr. Sundt, an Anglo-Indian.

Mission, it was not judged politic to disappoint the excited expectations of majesty, our magical box therefore accompanied us, and produced equal effects at the great court assembled at Sooltaneah, as it had at that of Shiraz.

The Elchee took particular pleasure, in the astonishment produced by his phantasmagoria. I one day suggested that wise and grave men, filling high stations, might expose themselves to ridicule from being amused by such trifles, and employing them as means of amusing and gratifying others His quick reply was, "The man who is always wise, is a fool! and he, above all others, is most foolish, who, entrenched in forms and observances, neglects to use every honest means with which human nature supplies him, to promote fair and honourable objects Besides," he added, "this amuses me, as much as any grown up child in Persia, and it is from my keen-sighted guests observing that my enjoyment is real, that they are so much delighted Were I to parade my superiority, by denying myself this, and other gratifications, which may be deemed trifling by men of measured manners, they would also be reserved and dignified, and we should become a group of those formalists,

whom our great philosopher* has described, as always using shifts and perspectives, to make superficies seem body, that hath depth and bulk."

After this answer, in which those that know him as well as I do will discover that the Elchee had succeeded in persuading himself, that his natural love of amusement was a valuable diplomatic quality, I, as a true follower of a mission, found it necessary to acquiesce in his reasoning, and must, therefore, recommend phantasmagorias, or something similar, as of essential importance to the success of all future embassies to Persia!

I found, on this second mission, that the duties of Hajee Ibrahim had, at his death, been divided amongst several ministers My old friend, Hajee Mahomed Hoosein, who had been so kind to us on the first mission, when he was Begler-Beg of Isfahan, was now, under the title of Ameen-ood-Douleh †, at the head of the finance and revenue department. He had risen from a low origin, that of a small shopkeeper in Isfahan The Persians, who delight in the

* Bacon

† This title means, the security of the state

wonderful, spoke of his riches as immense, and they referred the origin of that wealth (which enabled him to preserve the favour of the king, by satisfying his cupidity) to his having obtained part of the royal treasure, which was lost at Isfahan by Jaffier Khan Zend, when he fled, in the year 1785, in such confusion from that city, that not only his baggage and treasures, but the ensigns of royalty, were plundered by its inhabitants.

This account may have some foundation, but inquiry and observation satisfied me, that the wealth of this sensible minister arises out of those more honourable sources, which his industry and good management have created Suffice it, as a proof of this fact, to state, that every province under him is prosperous, and the city of Isfahan has more than doubled its inhabitants, and quadrupled its manufacture of rich silk and brocade, during the twenty years that he has been its governor

Hajee Mahomed Hoosein * is a man of great simplicity of manners, and neither has, nor pretends to, any of that wit, or brilliancy in conversation, for which many of the Persians are so

* This minister died three years ago

distinguished. He is rather dull in company, and appears what he really is, a plain man of business A friend of mine one day breakfasting with him, was surprised to hear him say to a poor man, who brought a pair of slippers to sell, "Sit down, my honest friend, and take your breakfast, we will bargain about the slippers afterwards"

This admission of inferiors to their society at meals is not, however, uncommon with men of rank in Persia It arises out of a sense of the sacred duties of hospitality, and out of parade, if they have not the reality of that humility, so strongly inculcated in the Koran Besides, their character and condition often disposes them to relax with those beneath them, and even with menial servants, whom they admit to a familiarity, which at first view appears contradictory to those impressions we have of their haughty character. I was one day almost reproached by Aga Meer, on account of the difference which he observed in our behaviour, to those of our countrymen, who were below us in condition "You speak of your consideration for inferiors," said he to me, "but you keep them at a much greater distance than we do Is this your

boasted freedom?" I told him that it was exactly our boasted freedom, which compelled us to the conduct we observed. "You are so classified in Persia," said I, "that you can descend from your condition as you like, a man below you will never presume on your familiarity so far as to think himself, for a moment, on the same level with those, who are so entirely distinct from his class in the community. In England we are all equal in the eye of the law, the rights of every man are the same, the differences which exist are merely those of fortune, which place us in the relation of master and servant, but where there is no other distinction, we are obliged to preserve that with care, or all forms and respects would soon be lost."

The good Meerzâ admitted that there might be some truth in what I stated. "But yours is a strange country," he said, "I shall never quite understand its ways and usages."

Meerzâ Sheffee*, who styles himself Premier, may be called the minister of the court, he is a veteran in all its arts, intrigues, and corruptions. Good-humoured, quick, and flexible, he has

* This minister is dead since the journal was written from which this is taken

managed to steer his crooked course through a long life, and still retains his head and his eyes, though both have, no doubt, been often in danger. The king is attached to him, as an old servant of the family.

Rizâ Koolee is also an old servant of the Kajir princes. He is a man of talent, his manners are peculiarly pleasing, and he is one of the most eloquent persons I have heard in Persia I had not the same opportunity of becoming intimately acquainted with this minister, as with others, but, if common report is to be believed, he has few superiors in good sense or good feeling He has evinced none of that precocious ambition, which is so common with his countrymen. He is reputed to be a modest as well as a deserving man, and the favour and fortune he has attained have not been acquired by means which could make him enemies By not pressing into the front rank, he has long combined safety with advancement *

These are the principal ministers of the king but Meerzâ Boozoorg, who has long presided,

* Since this journal was written he fell into disgrace and died, after being some time minister to the Prince Regent of Fars

under the title of Kâim Mekâm, over the councils of the heir-apparent, may be said to have much more influence than any of them in the political department He has greater experience, and understands the foreign interests of his country, better than any other minister, and joins to an equal temper, a thorough knowledge of the nature of his own situation, and the characters of those it is his duty to serve and obey He amused me one day, by telling me the rule by which he had hitherto escaped, and trusted he should continue to escape, the common fate of Persian ministers. " I never," said he, " accumulate money or property, I have a small inheritance in land, which has been in my family for centuries, this cannot, in accordance with usage, be confiscated and as to every thing else, I spend it as I get it This principle is known, and the king," he added, " often laughs, and says, ' I should not gain one piastre by the death and plunder of that extravagant fellow, Meerzâ Boozoorg * ' "

I must not forget in this place to mention Meerzâ Abd-ool-Wahhâb, who has long been,

* This old and able minister died lately of the cholera

and still continues, the Moonshee-ool-Memâlik, or chief letter-writer of the state, and well he merits his eminence I recognised his talent for the sublime, from the difficulty I had in discovering his meaning, amidst the clouds of tropes and metaphors with which it is always enveloped. That, however, is the taste of his country, and the man must have merit, who stands acknowledged to be the first in an art, in which all Persians of liberal education strive to excel. His character, in other respects, is that of a very sensible and respectable man, though an old Moollâh, a friend of mine, shook his head when I praised him, and whispered, "All you say may be true, but he is an inveterate Soofee"

Among the acquaintances I formed at this second visit, there was none that interested me in any degree so much as Mahomed Hoosein Khan of Merv, from whom I heard a short but affecting account of the vicissitudes of his eventful life. The facts he narrated exhibit so much of Asiatic character in its best and worst lights, that they must be acceptable to the reader Of their correctness there can be no doubt, being alike confirmed by the internal

evidence of their truth, the corroborating statements of contemporaries, and the high character of the narrator of his own extraordinary adventures.

The city of Merv*, during the reign of the Seffavean monarchs, was considered the most important frontier post of Persia; and in the reign of Tâmâsp the second, its defence was intrusted to the valour of a branch of the tribe of Kajir. As the strength of the nation decayed, the chiefs of this tribe were left, almost unsupported, to resist the attacks of the Tartar tribes on the Oxus, who made annual inroads upon them. They received for some years casual aid from the Afghâns of Cabool, but that government also fell into confusion, and Byrâm Ali Khan, the father of Mahomed Hoosein, had for several years to contend against that extraordinary bigot, Beggee Jân†, who had, by an union of fanaticism and wisdom, consolidated the divided tribes of this part of Tartary into

* Merv is the ancient Antiochia Margiana It was founded by Alexander, and became the capital of one of his successors, Antiochus Nicator

† For an account of this remarkable ruler, see History of Persia, vol ii p 243

one government, of which Bokhara was the capital.

The actions of Byrâm Ali, though given on the most authentic records, appear more like a romance than a history Suffice it here to say, he closed, on the banks of the Oxus, a life marked by the most gallant achievements, leaving his son the city and walls of Merv (for all its fields were desolate), and the name and example of a father almost worshipped by his soldiers, and as much praised when dead, as dreaded while living, by the enemies of his country.

Mahomed Hoosein Khan, though quite a youth, defended what remained of his inheritance with an unsubdued spirit, which obtained from every one an acknowledgment, that the son was worthy of his renowned sire. But all his struggles were unavailing, against the overwhelming numbers of the Oosbegs, who at last reduced the city to such a state of famine and distress, that its inhabitants insisted upon their chief surrendering to a power which it was hopeless any longer to oppose He was carried with all his family to Bokhara I shall give the remainder of his story in his own words, as

nearly as they can be recollected from his plain but minute relation.

"Beggee Jân was anxious I should adopt his creed, that of a Soofee, and abandon what he deemed the errors of the Sheah faith Circumstances compelled me so far to conform, that he expected my conversion, and for some time treated me and my family with respect, and even kindness

"During a period of some years, having no other employment, I applied myself to literature, and read all the histories I could find I should have continued to spend a contented, if not a happy life, in such pursuits, had this tranquillity not been interrupted by the flight of my nephew, Bâkir Khan, to the king of Persia I was considered as the contriver of his escape, and from that moment was looked upon as an enemy of Beggee Jân.

"Being aware of the suspicions he entertained, I one day addressed him in open court. I reminded him of his having sworn to treat me and mine with kindness, and of the peculiar obligations which an oath should impose upon a man of his sanctity. I bade him dismiss his

suspicions, and act as he had hitherto done, or confirm them by an examination of facts, and to treat me as a criminal if he found that I had in any way acted contrary to my word, or to that honour which belonged to me as the chief of a tribe, and a native of Merv, whose inhabitants had ever been celebrated for strict regard to their pledged faith

"Seeing the manly openness of this address had an effect upon his nobles and attendants, the old hypocrite arose from his seat, came forward, and kissed my forehead, while he thanked me for speaking to him as I had done, and promised to dismiss from his mind every suspicion regarding me He was, however, most insincere, and had no wish but to destroy me

"It would be tiresome," said Mahomed Hoosein, "to repeat all the artifices Beggee Jan used, to enable him to effect this object without loss of character Finding, however, that I was on my guard, and that I pursued a line of conduct which gave him no hopes of entangling me in his toils, he determined to seize and put me to death. It was long before I could bring myself to think that a person of his wary character would have recourse to un-

justifiable violence, nor was it until his guards had surrounded my house, and were bursting open the gates, that I could believe he would proceed to such extremities My followers, when this occurred, entreated leave to resist the attack. 'Let us at least die in warm blood,' they said. I forbade them to stir, adding, that it was perhaps only my life he sought, and my family and friends might be spared. At this moment the voice of Beggee Jân was heard, exclaiming, 'Bring me the head of Mahomed Hoosein Khan.' Satisfied of his object, I gave way to the earnest entreaties of all around me, and fled through a small back gate of the house, accompanied only by my nephew, Ibrahim Beg. I took this step, not so much from the hope of saving my own life, as that my escape would prevent further outrage to my family. It had the desired effect, for on its being stated that I was gone, and a strict search confirming the assertion, the troops were withdrawn, and sent, with others, in pursuit of one against whom their sovereign had now become perfectly furious.

"The detail of my journeys and sufferings, from the hour of my escape, till I found refuge

in Persia, would fill volumes. I shall make it as short as possible, for though I dwell on some parts of the scene with pleasing recollections, there are others which I cannot think of without horror However, God's will be done, let his glorious name be praised for all he does, it is not for blind mortals to complain" After these pious ejaculations the khan proceeded with his narration

"I had only three friends living in the town on whom I could depend I proceeded to the door of one, but he was asleep, and I durst not make the noise necessary to awake him When I came to the house of the second, I learnt that Beggee Jân had sent for him, and the third I was informed, by his domestics, having heard of my situation, had hastened to the scene, in the expectation of contributing to my escape.

"Hopeless and wearied, I wandered all that night about the streets of Bokhara, and a hundred times heard it proclaimed that ten thousand pieces of gold should be the reward of him who brought me to Beggee Jân

"It was towards morning when I went out of the gate of the city, accompanied only by my nephew We concealed ourselves in a corn field

till the evening, and then, though worn out with hunger, anxiety, and fatigue, we took the road leading to Sheher-Sebz* I was barefooted, and unaccustomed to walk, but my situation gave me a power of exertion beyond what I could have believed, and after a most distressing and dangerous journey we arrived at that city, the ruler of which, Niyâz Ali, moved by the account of my sufferings, treated me with kindness and distinction

"I remained six months at Sheher-Sebz, with a heart painfully anxious for my family, but knowing I was pursued by the rancorous hatred of Beggee Jân, and being satisfied that though Niyâz Ali had not the means to defend me, he would never be so base as to give me up, I chose to relieve him from the embarrassment my presence created When I intimated my intention to leave him, he expressed much regret, as he feared that my powerful enemy might succeed in seizing me He suggested, as the best chance of escape, that I should go to Narbotta Beg,

* Sheher-Sebz means the Verdant City, a name given by Timoor to the ancient city of Kesh, which was the place of his birth It lies about 130 miles direct east of Bokhara

the Prince of Ourat Teppah, which I accordingly did.

"Soon after my departure, Beggee Jân attacked Sheher-Sebz, and demanded that I should be given up, but the generous Niyâz Ali concealed my having left him, till he heard of my safe arrival at Ourat Teppah, when he announced my flight, and the attack of his city was abandoned.

"After remaining some months at Ourat Teppah, I desired to leave it, but the prince would not consent, until he heard that my enemy was secretly employing agents to murder his guest. His knowledge of the devotion of the Oosbegs to their sovereign made him have the most serious fears for my life and his own honour, if I continued within reach of these assassins To save both, he had recourse to an extraordinary expedient

"He took my nephew and me with him on one of his hunting parties, and privately asked me in what direction I wished to proceed I told him I desired to visit the court of Zeman Shâh He immediately (without informing any one) placed us in two large trunks, which were

put on camels and sent away as merchandize on the road towards Thibet *

"After we were beyond the reach of Beggee Jân we visited many towns in Tartary, but on our arrival at Thibet, I learnt that Abdûlla Khan, governor of Cashmere, had rebelled, and the country was consequently in a state of confusion I was therefore compelled to take the road of Bedekshan, and the mountains of Siyâh Posh †, dressed as a Fakeer, and under this disguise I arrived safe at Cabool, after having encountered a thousand distresses and dangers.

"When I arrived at this city I did not deem it prudent to reveal myself. Zemân Shâh and his vizier were gone to Herat, and Fatteh Ali Shah, king of Persia, was at Meshed. I continued a poor wandering mendicant for some time in Cabool I often saw noblemen of high rank, with whom I was well acquainted, without their having the slightest recollection of their

* Hajee Mahomed Hoosein Khan has written an account of this extraordinary journey and of the countries he passed through

† For an account of this remarkable people, see Elphinstone's Cabool

former friend. At this period I had almost died from want of food, and my distresses were increased by my nephew being afflicted with worms in his feet, which disabled him from walking I had to support him along from place to place, when I was myself sinking with hunger and fatigue. I one day went to the house of an old friend to ask relief, but he was not at home. His servants directed me to the câravânserâi of Aga Mahomed of Koom. I went thither, and stopped near the room in which was lodged Hajee Hoosein Abeer, a merchant whom I had formerly employed and favoured I staid there some time, till, mistaking me for a beggar, he bade me go away, saying he had nothing to give me. I thought he recognized, but would not acknowledge me in my distress, and I went away with a heavy but proud heart from the door of a man whom, I immediately afterwards found, was at the very time disbursing large sums on agents, whom he had sent in different directions to ascertain my fate, in order to contribute to my relief

"Having seated myself at some distance from the câravânserâi, a native of Meshed passed, who had long been in my service He no sooner cast

his eyes upon me, than he recognized his old master in spite of my disguise, and threw himself at my feet The moment he arose, he hastened to the room of Hajee Hoosein Abeer, who instantly returned with him, and after thanking God for this accidental discovery of one to whom he owed such benefits, he begged me to accompany him to his apartment From that moment my sufferings were at an end I was provided with clothes, horses, and every thing that I required, and proceeded towards Candahar in the character of a merchant, having strictly enjoined those who knew me, not to disclose my name or rank

"I thought at first of waiting at Candahar till Zemân Shâh reached that city, and of trying what could be effected through his aid I heard, however, that he had proceeded from Herat to Cabool, by the upper road, through the country of the Hazariah.

"As I observed, from the way in which affairs were conducted, that the government of this prince had no stability, I resolved on proceeding to the court of Teheran, but not wishing to give the court of Cabool any just ground of offence, I wrote to the vizier Wefâ-dâr Khan, and

gave him a particular account of all that had befallen me from the time of my escape from Bokhara till that moment. Zemân Shâh commanded his minister to desire me to stay at Candahar until his arrival But I learnt the disposition of the court by the first two words of the vizier's answer these were, "Hookm-e-alee," or (it is) the high command, a style of address suited only to an inferior The instant I read this expression I determined to leave a country where my reduced condition made men presume to treat me with such arrogance.

"When preparing to quit Candahar, the road was shut by the advance of the prince Mahmood, who took the city, and I was plundered of all I had brought from Cabool, as were also the merchants with whom I associated I remained at that city a short time after this event, but seeing nothing in the character of Mahmood that gave me confidence, I did not discover myself to him, but set out as soon as I could with some merchants, and, travelling through Seestan, arrived at the fort of Khyn in Khorassan, where I was kindly and hospitably treated by its chief, who was an old friend of my family He appointed a Mehmandar to see me

safe to Teheran, and sent an express to announce my arrival to the king of Persia, who instantly invited me to his court.

"Before I arrived at Teheran, I learnt that the cruel tyrant of Bokhara, enraged at my escape, had first imprisoned my family in wells *, and afterwards put every one of them to death †, upbraiding them with my having taken refuge in Persia, a country towards which he ever entertained a spirit of the most inveterate hostility.

"I proceeded," said the Khan, hardly able to conclude his narration, "with a broken heart, to the capital of Persia, where the noble and generous conduct of the king affords me all the consolation I can receive in this world, in which I am, though apparently surrounded with every luxury and every honour, a wretched and desolate man."

* Imprisonment in dry wells is very common in some parts of Tartary

† Thirty-eight persons were put to death, of whom eleven were sons, brothers, and nephews

Such of the women of his family as were not killed were given away to persons of inferior condition a brutal and degrading usage practised in Persia, as well as Tartary, in cases where it is desired to disgrace as well as punish men of high rank

The forlorn and fugitive chief of Merv was received at the court of Persia with every mark of regard and honour, to which he would have been entitled, as lord of that once famous city and in the full zenith of his power. The king went into mourning for his family, and every Omrah of the Kajir tribe was ordered to pay him a visit of condolence, and even Abbas Meerzâ was desired by his father to wait upon and console the afflicted stranger and guest.

On the death of Hajee Ibrahim, the king is said to have desired to raise Mahomed Hoosein Khan to the rank of prime minister, but he declined the dangerous dignity, declaring he had made a vow never again to enter upon affairs of state, unless an opportunity was afforded him of wreaking his vengeance on the merciless ruler of Bokhara, by sacking that capital.

Mahomed Hoosein Khan continues his habits of study, which, added to the information he has acquired in his travels, renders his conversation at once agreeable and instructive. His conduct, since he came into Persia, has obtained him great respect from all classes There are some few who accuse him of intriguing, and assert, that notwithstanding his professed vow, he

secretly mixes in matters of state, but such suspicions and accusations are probably the consequence of his continuing to enjoy so great a share of the royal favour. His ostensible station is that of the Nedeem, or chosen companion of the sovereign, and as such he is almost in constant attendance upon the king's person, whose whole conduct towards this unfortunate chief* does equal honour to his head and heart.

* Mahomed Hoosein Khan of Merv has finished his earthly career since this was written

CHAPTER XX

DEPARTURE FROM SOOLTANEAH—TEBREEZ—CLIMATE—LAKE OF OORMEAH—AHMED THE COBBLER

THOUGH delighted to turn towards home, the joy at our departure from the royal camp was not unmingled with regret, at taking leave, probably for the last time, of many of our Persian friends. The king's attention to the Elchee had been most flattering, and we had all participated in the royal favour Fatteh Ali Shah had, indeed, with all due allowances for other motives, evinced on this occasion sentiments and feelings which did him honour as a man, as well as a sovereign.

We went from Sooltaneah to Tebreez, which has for many years been the residence of the heir apparent, Abbas Meerzâ. Tebreez is celebrated as one of the most healthy cities in Persia, and it is on this ground alone that we can account for its being so often rebuilt, after its

repeated demolition by earthquakes. It is seldom free, even for a twelvemonth, from slight shocks, and it is little more than thirty years since it was levelled with the ground, by one of these terrible convulsions of nature

I was more surprised at the salubrity of this town, from knowing the great extremes of heat and cold to which it is subject, having obtained from a friend, who had resided there during the whole of the preceding year, a most accurate diary of the various changes of its climate. From this it appeared, that on the twentieth of October there was a heavy fall of snow, which did not however remain long upon the ground, the weather again became mild, and there was no excessive cold until the middle of December, from which period till the end of January Fahrenheit's thermometer, when exposed to the air at night, never rose above zero, and in the house, at mid-day, it was seldom above 18°.

January was by far the coldest month, during it, the water is described as becoming almost instantaneously solid in the tumblers upon the dining-table, and the ink often freezing in the inkstand, although the table was quite close to the fire. For at least a fortnight not an egg

was to be had, all being split by the cold Some bottles of wine froze, although covered with straw, and many of the copper ewers were split by the expansion of the water when frozen in them.

According to this diary, the weather became comparatively mild towards the end of February, but it appears that here, as in England, a

"Lingering winter chills the lap of May,"

for on the first of that month there was a heavy fall of snow, with such cold, that all the promise of the spring was destroyed Of the heat that ensued, and the sudden and great changes to which Tebreez is subject, we had abundant proof, in the month of June, the range of the thermometer being usually, within the twenty-four hours, from 56° to 94°, a difference of 38°

The extreme heat of summer causes most of the houses in Tebreez to be built so as to admit the air during that season, but the architects of Persia fall far short of their brethren in Europe, in forming plans by which the cool air can be admitted in summer and excluded in winter. This partly accounts for the effects of the cold to which I have alluded, but the city of Tebreez,

and many other parts of Aderbejan, and still more of the neighbouring province of Kûrdistan, though nowhere beyond the fortieth degree of latitude, are, from their great elevation, subject to extreme cold. In the latter country I found, on the morning of the 17th of August, ice half an inch thick on a basin of water standing in my tent.

During the few days we remained at Tebreez I was in continual attendance upon the Elchee, who was engaged in inspecting the state and equipment of the newly-formed regular troops of Persia The day before our departure he had a long interview with Abbas Meerzâ, who appeared to expect that what he had seen of his military improvements would alter his sentiments as to the policy of the change This, however, was not the case, the arguments before urged were repeated, and though every credit was given to the young and ardent prince for the surprising progress he had made, the Elchee still contended that it must be dangerous for a country to make its armies more tangible to an enemy, until certain of being his equal in the field of battle.

In the course of their conversation upon this

subject, the Elchee related to the prince what the late minister, Hajee Ibrahim *, had told him, of the sentiments and designs of that able monarch, Aga Mahomed Khan, when a large army of Russians, under Valerian Zuboff, crossed the Araxes, and encamped on the plain of Mogam, in the month of November, 1796

Notwithstanding the severity of the season, Aga Mahomed Khan made every preparation to resist the threatened invasion He assembled the leaders of his army, and told them, that the Russians had presumed, during his absence in Khorassan, to invade the opposite frontier of his dominions "But my valiant warriors," he added, "shall be led against them, and we will, by the blessing of God, charge their celebrated lines of infantry and batteries of cannon, and cut them to pieces with our conquering swords" The chiefs applauded the heroic resolution of their sovereign, and promised to support him with their lives. When they were gone, the monarch directed Hajee Ibrahim to approach,

* This occurrence was told the Elchee by Hajee Ibrahim in 1800, scarcely four years after the event to which it referred Vide Hist Persia, vol ii p 297

and asked him if he had heard what he said to the military commanders. The minister said he had. "And do you think," said he, "I will do what I have told them?" "Undoubtedly, if it is your majesty's pleasure," was the reply. "Hajee," said Aga Mahomed Khan, half angry, "have I been mistaken? are you also a fool? Can a man of your wisdom believe I will ever run my head against their walls of steel, and expose my irregular army to be destroyed by their cannon and disciplined troops? I know better Their shot shall never reach me, but they shall possess no country beyond its range. They shall not know sleep, and let them march where they choose, I will surround them with a desert."

From Tebreez, our first march of fifteen miles was to Khoosroo-Shàh, a village situated in a beautiful valley, where we remained for a day, admiring the scenery, and enjoying the cool shade of the surrounding groves and gardens In one of the latter our Mehmandar gave us a sumptuous breakfast.

Our second day's journey brought us in sight of the lake of Oormeah, which is of considerable extent We examined a marble quarry near its

shore, which had not been worked since the time of Nadir Shâh The Persians wished us to believe that the peculiar quality of the water of the lake, by mixing with the soil, formed the marble, which they declared was soft when first cut, but became hard from exposure to the sun One of our party, who was a geologist, endeavoured to prove to them that this belief was quite erroneous, by explaining the nature of the strata of this quarry, as well as the composition of the marble, but his knowledge was evidently most unpopular with the audience he had gathered round him, and they continued as completely satisfied, as they had been before his scientific demonstrations, that the marble was formed in the manner related by their fathers.

The lake of Oormeah is computed to be three hundred miles in circumference. It is very clear, but salt, and has a sulphureous smell. We were assured that no fish or any living creature is to be found in this great expanse of water, which one of the learned men of our mission informed me was the Spauto of Strabo, and the Marcianus of Ptolemy

From our encampment near the shore of this famous lake to the city of Mârâgâ is eighteen

miles we made this march at night Moollâh Adeenah, the story-teller of his majesty, was one of our party The Elchee asked him to beguile the weariness of our road with a tale "How many fersekhs long do you wish it?" was his reply "At least five," was the answer. "I can exactly suit you," said the Moollâh, "you shall have Ahmed the Cobbler" I could not help laughing at this mode of measuring a tale, but I was assured it was a common custom, arising out of the calculation professed story-tellers were compelled to make of the leisure of their hearers All further remarks upon this usage were put an end to, by Moollâh Adeenah desiring us to be silent and attentive, his wish being complied with, he commenced as follows

"In the great city of Isfahan lived Ahmed the cobbler, an honest and industrious man, whose wish was to pass through life quietly, and he might have done so, had he not married a handsome wife, who, although she had condescended to accept of him as a husband, was far from being contented with his humble sphere of life.

"Sittâra, such was the name of Ahmed's wife, was ever forming foolish schemes of riches

and grandeur and though Ahmed never encouraged them, he was too fond a husband to quarrel with what gave her pleasure · an incredulous smile or a shake of the head, was his only answer to her often-told day-dreams, and she continued to persuade herself, that she was certainly destined to great fortune

"It happened one evening, while in this temper of mind, that she went to the Hemmâm, where she saw a lady retiring dressed in a magnificent robe, covered with jewels, and surrounded by slaves This was the very condition Sittâra had always longed for, and she eagerly inquired the name of the happy person, who had so many attendants and such fine jewels She learned it was the wife of the chief astrologer to the king With this information she returned home Her husband met her at the door, but was received with a frown, nor could all his caresses obtain a smile or a word, for several hours she continued silent, and in apparent misery, at length she said:

"'Cease your caresses, unless you are ready to give me a proof that you do really and sincerely love me.'

"'What proof of love,' exclaimed poor

Ahmed, 'can you desire, which I will not give?'

"'Give over cobbling, it is a vile, low trade, and never yields more than ten or twelve dinars a day Turn astrologer, your fortune will be made, and I shall have all I wish, and be happy.'

"'Astrologer!' cried Ahmed, 'astrologer! Have you forgotten who I am—a cobbler, without any learning—that you want me to engage in a profession which requires so much skill and knowledge?'

"'I neither think nor care about your qualifications,' said the enraged wife 'all I know is, that if you do not turn astrologer immediately, I will be divorced from you to morrow.'

"The cobbler remonstrated, but in vain. The figure of the astrologer's wife, with her jewels and her slaves, had taken complete possession of Sittâra's imagination All night it haunted her, she dreamt of nothing else, and on awaking declared she would leave the house, if her husband did not comply with her wishes What could poor Ahmed do? he was no astrologer, but he was dotingly fond of his wife, and he could not bear the idea of losing her. He promised to obey, and having sold his little

stock, bought an astrolabe, an astronomical almanack, and a table of the twelve signs of the zodiac. Furnished with these, he went to the market-place, crying, 'I am an astrologer! I know the sun, and the moon, and the stars, and the twelve signs of the zodiac, I can calculate nativities, I can foretell every thing that is to happen!'

"No man was better known than Ahmed the cobbler A crowd soon gathered round him. 'What, friend Ahmed,' said one, 'have you worked till your head is turned?'—'Are you tired of looking down at your last,' cried another, 'that you are now looking up at the planets?' These and a thousand other jokes assailed the ears of the poor cobbler, who notwithstanding continued to exclaim that he was an astrologer, having resolved on doing what he could to please his beautiful wife

"It so happened that the king's jeweller was passing by He was in great distress, having lost the richest ruby belonging to the crown. Every search had been made to recover this inestimable jewel, but to no purpose, and as the jeweller knew he could no longer conceal its loss from the king, he looked forward to death

as inevitable In this hopeless state, while wandering about the town, he reached the crowd around Ahmed, and asked what was the matter 'Don't you know Ahmed the cobbler?' said one of the bystanders, laughing 'he has been inspired, and is become an astrologer.'

"A drowning man will catch at a broken reed the jeweller no sooner heard the sound of the word astrologer, than he went up to Ahmed, told him what had happened, and said, 'If you understand your art, you must be able to discover the king's ruby Do so, and I will give you two hundred pieces of gold But if you do not succeed within six hours, I will use all my influence at court to have you put to death as an impostor'

"Poor Ahmed was thunderstruck He stood long without being able to move or speak, reflecting on his misfortunes, and grieving, above all, that his wife, whom he so loved, had, by her envy and selfishness, brought him to such a fearful alternative. Full of these sad thoughts, he exclaimed aloud, 'Oh woman, woman! thou art more baneful to the happiness of man than the poisonous dragon of the desert!'

"The lost ruby had been secreted by the

jeweller's wife, who, disquieted by those alarms which ever attend guilt, sent one of her female slaves to watch her husband. This slave, on seeing her master speak to the astrologer, drew near, and when she heard Ahmed, after some moments of apparent abstraction, compare a woman to a poisonous dragon, she was satisfied that he must know every thing. She ran to her mistress, and, breathless with fear, cried, 'You are discovered, my dear mistress, you are discovered by a vile astrologer. Before six hours are past the whole story will be known, and you will become infamous, if you are even so fortunate as to escape with life, unless you can find some way of prevailing on him to be merciful' She then related what she had seen and heard, and Ahmed's exclamation carried as complete conviction to the mind of the terrified mistress as it had done to that of her slave.

"The jeweller's wife, hastily throwing on her veil, went in search of the dreaded astrologer When she found him, she threw herself at his feet, crying, 'Spare my honour and my life, and I will confess every thing!'

"'What can you have to confess to me?' exclaimed Ahmed, in amazement.

" 'Oh nothing! nothing with which you are not already acquainted. You know too well that I stole the ruby from the king's crown. I did so to punish my husband, who uses me most cruelly, and I thought by this means to obtain riches for myself, and to have him put to death. But you, most wonderful man, from whom nothing is hidden, have discovered and defeated my wicked plan. I beg only for mercy, and will do whatever you command me.'

" An angel from heaven could not have brought more consolation to Ahmed than did the jeweller's wife He assumed all the dignified solemnity that became his new character, and said, 'Woman! I know all thou hast done, and it is fortunate for thee that thou hast come to confess thy sin, and beg for mercy before it was too late Return to thy house, put the ruby under the pillow of the couch on which thy husband sleeps, let it be laid on the side farthest from the door, and be satisfied thy guilt shall never be even suspected'

" The jeweller's wife returned home, and did as she was desired In an hour Ahmed followed her, and told the jeweller he had made his calculations, and found by the aspect of the sun

and moon, and by the configuration of the stars that the ruby was at that moment lying under the pillow of his couch, on the side farthest from the door. The jeweller thought Ahmed must be crazy but as a ray of hope is like a ray from heaven to the wretched, he ran to his couch, and there, to his joy and wonder, found the ruby in the very place described. He came back to Ahmed, embraced him, called him his dearest friend and the preserver of his life, gave him the two hundred pieces of gold, declaring that he was the first astrologer of the age.

" These praises conveyed no joy to the poor cobbler, who returned home more thankful to God for his preservation than elated by his good fortune The moment he entered the door, his wife ran up to him, and exclaimed, ' Well, my dear astrologer ! what success ?'

" ' There ! (said Ahmed very gravely) there are two hundred pieces of gold I hope you will be satisfied now, and not ask me again to hazard my life, as I have done this morning.' He then related all that had passed. But the recital made a very different impression on the lady from what these occurrences had made on Ahmed Sittâra saw nothing but the gold

which would enable her to vie with the chief astrologer's wife at the Hemmâm. 'Courage! (she said) courage! my dearest husband. This is only your first labour in your new and noble profession. Go on, and prosper, and we shall become rich and happy.'

" In vain Ahmed remonstrated, and represented the danger, she burst into tears, and accused him of not loving her, ending with her usual threat of insisting upon a divorce.

" Ahmed's heart melted, and he agreed to make another trial Accordingly, next morning he sallied forth with his astrolabe, his twelve signs of the zodiac, and his almanack, exclaiming, as before, 'I am an astrologer! I know the sun, and the moon, and the stars, and the twelve signs of the zodiac, I can calculate nativities, I can foretell every thing that is to happen!' A crowd again gathered round him, but it was now with wonder, and not ridicule, for the story of the ruby had gone abroad, and the voice of fame had converted the poor cobbler Ahmed into the ablest and most learned astrologer that was ever seen at Isfahan

" While every body was gazing at him, a lady passed by veiled. She was the wife of one of

the richest merchants in the city, and had just been at the Hemmâm, where she had lost a valuable necklace and ear-rings She was now returning home in great alarm, lest her husband should suspect her of having given her jewels to a lover Seeing the crowd around Ahmed, she asked the reason of their assembling, and was informed of the whole story of the famous astrologer how he had been a cobbler, was inspired with supernatural knowledge, and could, with the help of his astrolabe, his twelve signs of the zodiac, and his almanack, discover all that ever had, or ever would happen in the world. The story of the jeweller and the king's ruby was then told her, accompanied by a thousand wonderful circumstances which had never occurred The lady, quite satisfied of his skill, went up to Ahmed, and mentioned her loss, saying, 'A man of your knowledge and penetration will easily discover my jewels find them, and I will give you fifty pieces of gold.'

"The poor cobbler was quite confounded, and looked down, thinking only how to escape without a public exposure of his ignorance. The lady, in pressing through the crowd, had torn the lower part of her veil Ahmed's downcast

eyes noticed this, and wishing to inform her of it in a delicate manner, before it was observed by others, he whispered to her—'Lady, look down at the rent' The lady's head was full of her loss, and she was at that moment endeavouring to recollect how it could have occurred Ahmed's speech brought it at once to her mind, and she exclaimed in delighted surprise—'Stay here a few moments, thou great astrologer. I will return immediately with the reward thou so well deservest' Saying this, she left him, and soon returned, carrying in one hand the necklace and ear-rings, and in the other, a purse with the fifty pieces of gold. 'There is gold for thee,' she said, 'thou wonderful man! to whom all the secrets of nature are revealed. I had quite forgotten where I laid the jewels, and without thee should never have found them But when thou desiredst me to look at the rent below, I instantly recollected the rent near the bottom of the wall in the bath-room, where, before undressing, I had hid them. I can now go home in peace and comfort, and it is all owing to thee, thou wisest of men!'

"After these words she walked away, and Ahmed returned to his home, thankful to Pro-

vidence for his preservation, and fully resolved never again to tempt it His handsome wife, however, could not yet rival the chief astrologer's lady in her appearance at the Hemmâm, so she renewed her entreaties and threats to make her fond husband continue his career as an astrologer.

" About this time it happened that the king's treasury was robbed of forty chests of gold and jewels, forming the greater part of the wealth of the kingdom The high treasurer and other officers of state used all diligence to find the thieves, but in vain The king sent for his astrologer, and declared, that if the robbers were not detected by a stated time, he, as well as the principal ministers, should be put to death. Only one day of the short period given them remained. All their search had proved fruitless, and the chief astrologer who had made his calculations and exhausted his art to no purpose, had quite resigned himself to his fate, when one of his friends advised him to send for the wonderful cobbler, who had become so famous for his extraordinary discoveries. Two slaves were immediately despatched for Ahmed, whom they

commanded to go with them to their master 'You see the effects of your ambition,' said the poor cobbler to his wife, 'I am going to my death. The king's astrologer has heard of my presumption, and is determined to have me executed as an impostor'

"On entering the palace of the chief astrologer, he was surprised to see that dignified person come forward to receive him, and lead him to the seat of honour, and not less so to hear himself thus addressed 'The ways of heaven, most learned and excellent Ahmed, are unsearchable The high are often cast down and the low are lifted up The whole world depends upon fate and fortune It is my turn now to be depressed by fate, it is thine to be exalted by fortune'

"His speech was here interrupted by a messenger from the king, who, having heard of the cobbler's fame, desired his attendance Poor Ahmed now concluded that it was all over with him, and followed the king's messenger, praying to God that he would deliver him from this peril When he came into the king's presence, he bent his body to the ground, and wished his

majesty long life and prosperity 'Tell me, Ahmed,' said the king, 'who has stolen my treasure?'

"'It was not one man,' answered Ahmed, after some consideration, 'there were forty thieves concerned in the robbery'

"'Very well,' said the king 'but who were they? and what have they done with my gold and jewels?'

"'These questions,' said Ahmed, 'I cannot now answer, but I hope to satisfy your majesty, if you will grant me forty days to make my calculations'

"'I grant you forty days,' said the king, 'but when they are past, if my treasure is not found, your life shall pay the forfeit'

"Ahmed returned to his house well pleased, for he resolved to take advantage of the time allowed him to fly from a city where his fame was likely to be his ruin. 'Well, Ahmed,' said his wife, as he entered, 'what news at court?'

"'No news at all,' said he, 'except that I am to be put to death at the end of forty days, unless I find forty chests of gold and jewels, which have been stolen from the royal treasury.'

"'But you will discover the thieves'

" 'How? by what means am I to find them?'

" 'By the same art which discovered the ruby and the lady's necklace'

" 'The same art!' replied Ahmed. 'Foolish woman! thou knowest that I have no art, and that I have only pretended to it for the sake of pleasing thee. But I have had sufficient skill to gain forty days, during which time we may easily escape to some other city, and, with the money I now possess, and the aid of my former occupation, we may still obtain an honest livelihood.'

" 'An honest livelihood!' repeated his lady, with scorn 'Will thy cobbling, thou mean, spiritless wretch! ever enable me to go to the Hemmâm like the wife of the chief astrologer? Hear me, Ahmed! Think only of discovering the king's treasure Thou hast just as good a chance of doing so as thou hadst of finding the ruby, and the necklace and ear-rings. At all events, I am determined thou shalt not escape, and shouldst thou attempt to run away, I will inform the king's officers, and have thee taken up and put to death, even before the forty days are expired Thou knowest me too well, Ahmed, to doubt my keeping my word. So take courage,

and endeavour to make thy fortune, and to place me in that rank of life to which my beauty entitles me.'

"The poor cobbler was dismayed at this speech, but knowing there was no hope of changing his wife's resolution, he resigned himself to his fate. 'Well,' said he, 'your will shall be obeyed. All I desire is to pass the few remaining days of my life as comfortably as I can. You know I am no scholar, and have little skill in reckoning, so there are forty dates. give me one of them every night after I have said my prayers, that I may put them in a jar, and, by counting them, may always see how many of the few days I have to live are gone.'

"The lady, pleased at carrying her point, took the dates, and promised to be punctual in doing what her husband desired

"Meanwhile the thieves who had stolen the king's treasure, having been kept from leaving the city by fear of detection and pursuit, had received accurate information of every measure taken to discover them. One of them was among the crowd before the palace on the day the king sent for Ahmed, and hearing that the cobbler had immediately declared their exact

number, he ran in a fright to his comrades, and exclaimed, 'We are all found out! Ahmed, the new astrologer, has told the king that there are forty of us'

"There needed no astrologer to tell that,' said the captain of the gang 'This Ahmed, with all his simple good-nature, is a shrewd fellow Forty chests having been stolen, he naturally guessed that there must be forty thieves, and he has made a good hit, that is all still it is prudent to watch him, for he certainly has made some strange discoveries One of us must go to-night, after dark, to the terrace of this cobbler's house, and listen to his conversation with his handsome wife, for he is said to be very fond of her, and will, no doubt, tell her what success he has had in his endeavours to detect us.'

"Every body approved of this scheme; and soon after nightfall one of the thieves repaired to the terrace He arrived there just as the cobbler had finished his evening prayers, and his wife was giving him the first date. 'Ah,' said Ahmed, as he took it, 'there is one of the forty'

"The thief, hearing these words, hastened, in consternation, to the gang, and told them

that the moment he took his post he had been perceived by the supernatural knowledge of Ahmed, who immediately told his wife that one of them was there. The spy's tale was not believed by his hardened companions, something was imputed to his fears, he might have been mistaken, in short, it was determined to send two men the next night at the same hour They reached the house just as Ahmed, having finished his prayers, had received the second date, and heard him exclaim, 'My dear wife, to-night there are two of them!'

"The astonished thieves fled, and told their still incredulous comrades what they had heard Three men were consequently sent the third night, four the fourth, and so on Being afraid of venturing during the day, they always came as evening closed in, and just as Ahmed was receiving his date hence they all in turn heard him say that which convinced them he was aware of their presence On the last night they all went, and Ahmed exclaimed aloud, 'The number is complete! To-night the whole forty are here!'

"All doubts were now removed It was impossible that Ahmed should have discovered them

by any natural means How could he ascertain their exact number? and night after night, without ever once being mistaken? He must have learnt it by his skill in astrology. Even the captain now yielded, in spite of his incredulity, and declared his opinion that it was hopeless to elude a man thus gifted, he therefore advised that they should make a friend of the cobbler, by confessing every thing to him, and bribing him to secrecy by a share of the booty

"His advice was approved of, and an hour before dawn they knocked at Ahmed's door The poor man jumped out of bed, and, supposing the soldiers were come to lead him to execution, cried out, 'Have patience! I know what you are come for. It is a very unjust and wicked deed'

"'Most wonderful man!' said the captain, as the door was opened, 'we are fully convinced that thou knowest why we are come, nor do we mean to justify the action of which thou speakest Here are two thousand pieces of gold, which we will give thee, provided thou wilt swear to say nothing more about the matter.'

"'Say nothing about it!' said Ahmed. 'Do you think it possible I can suffer such gross

wrong and injustice without complaining, and making it known to all the world?'

"'Have mercy upon us!' exclaimed the thieves, falling on their knees; 'only spare our lives, and we will restore the royal treasure.'

"The cobbler started, rubbed his eyes to see if he were asleep or awake, and being satisfied that he was awake, and that the men before him were really the thieves, he assumed a solemn tone, and said—'Guilty men! ye are persuaded that ye cannot escape from my penetration, which reaches unto the sun and moon, and knows the position and aspect of every star in the heavens. Your timely repentance has saved you. But ye must immediately restore all that ye have stolen. Go straightway, and carry the forty chests exactly as ye found them, and bury them a foot deep under the southern wall of the old ruined Hemmâm, beyond the king's palace. If ye do this punctually, your lives are spared; but if ye fail in the slightest degree, destruction will fall upon you and your families.'

"The thieves promised obedience to his commands, and departed. Ahmed then fell on his knees, and returned thanks to God for this signal mark of his favour. About two hours after

the royal guards came, and desired Ahmed to *follow them* He *said he would attend them as* soon as he had taken leave of his wife, to whom he determined not to impart what had occurred until he saw the result He bade her farewell very affectionately, she supported herself with great fortitude on this trying occasion, exhorting her husband to be of good cheer, and said a few words about the goodness of Providence. But the fact was, Sittâra fancied, that if God took the worthy cobbler to himself, her beauty might attract some rich lover, who would enable her to go to the Hemmâm with as much splendour as the astrologer's lady, whose image, adorned with jewels and fine clothes, and surrounded by slaves, still haunted her imagination

"'The decrees of Heaven are just a reward suited to their merits awaited Ahmed and his wife The good man stood with a cheerful countenance before the king, who was impatient for his arrival, and immediately said, 'Ahmed, thy looks are promising, hast thou discovered my treasure?'

"'Does your majesty require the thieves or the treasure? The stars will only grant one or

the other,' said Ahmed, looking at his table of astrological calculations. 'Your majesty must make your choice. I can deliver up either, but not both.'

"'I should be sorry not to punish the thieves,' answered the king, 'but if it must be so, I choose the treasure.'

"'And you give the thieves a full and free pardon?'

"'I do, provided I find my treasure untouched.'

"'Then,' said Ahmed, 'if your majesty will follow me, the treasure shall be restored to you.'

"The king and all his nobles followed the cobbler to the ruins of the old Hemmàm. There, casting his eyes toward Heaven, Ahmed muttered some sounds, which were supposed by the spectators to be magical conjurations, but which were in reality the prayers and thanksgivings of a sincere and pious heart to God, for his wonderful deliverance. When his prayer was finished, he pointed to the southern wall, and requested that his majesty would order his attendants to dig there. The work was hardly begun, when the whole forty chests were found in the same

state as when stolen, with the treasurer's seal upon them still unbroken.

"The king's joy knew no bounds: he embraced Ahmed, and immediately appointed him his chief astrologer, assigned to him an apartment in the palace, and declared that he should marry* his only daughter, as it was his duty to promote the man whom God had so singularly favoured, and had made instrumental in restoring the treasures of his kingdom The young princess, who was more beautiful than the moon, was not dissatisfied with her father's choice, for her mind was stored with religion and virtue, and she had learnt to value beyond all earthly qualities that piety and learning which she believed Ahmed to possess. The royal will was carried into execution as soon as formed. The wheel of fortune had taken a complete turn. The morning had found Ahmed in a wretched hovel, rising from a sorry bed, in the expectation of losing his life in the evening he was the lord of a rich palace, and married to the only daughter of a powerful king. But this change did

* It is very common in the East for the daughters of monarchs to be married to men eminent for piety or learning, however low their origin

not alter his character. As he had been meek and humble in adversity, he was modest and gentle in prosperity. Conscious of his own ignorance, he continued to ascribe his good fortune solely to the favour of Providence He became daily more attached to the beautiful and virtuous princess whom he had married , and he could not help contrasting her character with that of his former wife, whom he had ceased to love, and of whose unreasonable and unfeeling vanity he was now fully sensible.

" As Ahmed did not return to his house, Sittâra only heard of his elevation from common rumour. She saw with despair that her wishes for his advancement had been more than accomplished, but that all her own desires had been entirely frustrated. Her husband was chief astrologer—the very situation she had set her heart on , he was rich enough to enable his wife to surpass all the ladies of Isfahan, in the number of her slaves, and the finery of her clothes and jewels, whenever she went to the Hemmâm : but he had married a princess , and his former wife, according to custom, was banished from his house, and condemned to live on whatever

pittance she might receive from a man whose love and esteem she had for ever forfeited. These thoughts distracted her mind · her envy was excited by the accounts she daily heard of Ahmed's happiness, and of the beauty of the princess, and she now became anxious only for his destruction, looking on him as the sole cause of her disappointment.

"An opportunity of indulging her revengeful feelings was not long wanting The king of Seestan had sent an emerald of extraordinary size and brilliancy as a present to the king of Irak It was carefully enclosed in a box, to which there were three keys, and one of them was given in charge to each of the three confidential servants employed to convey it. When they reached Isfahan, the box was opened, but the emerald was gone. Nothing could exceed their consternation, each accused the other. as the lock was not broken, it was evident one of them must be the thief. They consulted what was to be done, to conceal what had happened was impossible, the very attempt would have brought death on them all. It was resolved, therefore, to lay the whole matter before the

king, and beg that by his great wisdom he would detect the culprit, and that he would show mercy to the other two

"The king heard the story with astonishment, but was unable to find any clue by which he might ascertain the truth He summoned his vizier and all the wisest men of his court, but they were as much at a loss as their master. The report spread through the city, and Sittâra thought she had now the means of working her husband's ruin. She solicited a private audience of his majesty, on the plea of having a communication of importance to make Her request was granted. On entering the royal presence she threw herself at his feet, exclaiming, 'Pardon, O king! my having so long concealed the guilt of my husband Ahmed, whose alliance is a disgrace to the royal blood He is no astrologer, but an associate of thieves, and by that means alone did he discover the royal treasure. If any doubts are entertained of my speaking the truth, let his majesty command Ahmed to recover the emerald which the servants of the king of Seestan have stolen Surely the man who by his wonderful art ascertained where all the treasure of the kingdom was concealed, will

find it an easy matter to discover a single precious stone.'

"The king, who loved his son-in-law, was grieved by this information. Still, as the honour of his family was concerned, he resolved to put Ahmed to the test, and, if he found him an impostor, to vindicate the royal dignity by his condign punishment. He therefore sent for Ahmed, told him what had happened, and added, 'I give you twenty days to discover who stole the emerald. If you succeed, you shall be raised to the highest honours of the state. If not, you shall suffer death for having deceived me'

"Poor Ahmed quitted the presence quite disconsolate. The princess, perceiving his affliction, inquired the cause Ahmed was by nature as sincere as he was pious and humble. He related, without concealment or disguise, every event of his past life, and concluded with these words: 'You must see, from what I have said, how incapable I am of doing what your father enjoins. My life must answer for it, and my only consolation is, that I shall, in twenty days, relieve you from a husband, whom from this time you must despise.'

"'I only love you the better, my dear Ahmed, for your sincerity and truth,' said the princess. 'One, who has been so favoured by Heaven, must be dear to every pious heart Be of good cheer, I will turn astrologer this time, and see whether I can find out the thief All I require is, that you endeavour to be composed, while I consult the stars and make my calculations.'

"Ahmed, delighted with this proof of affection, and reassured by the confidence of her manner, promised to be obedient, and said he would only venture to assist her exertions by his earnest prayers to that Power which had never deserted him.

"The princess immediately invited the messengers from the king of Seestan to her palace. They were surprised at the invitation and still more at their reception. 'You are strangers,' she said to them, 'and come from a powerful king it is my wish to show you every attention. As to the lost emerald, think no more of it, it is a mere trifle. I will intercede with the king, my father, to give himself no further concern on the subject, being convinced that it has been lost by one of those strange accidents for which it is impossible to account.'

"The princess entertained the strangers for several days, and during that time the emerald seemed to be forgotten. She conversed with them freely, inquiring particularly of Seestan, and the countries they had seen on their travels. Flattered by her condescension, they became confident of their safety, and were delighted with their royal patroness. The princess, seeing them completely off their guard, turned the conversation one evening on wonderful occurrences, and after each had related his story, said, 'I will now recount to you some events of my own life, which you will, I think, deem more extraordinary than any you have ever heard.

"'I am my father's only child, and have therefore been a favourite from my birth. I was brought up in the belief that I could command whatever this world can afford, and was taught that unbounded liberality is the first and most princely of virtues. I early resolved to surpass every former example of generosity. I thought my power of doing good, and making every body happy, was as unlimited as my wish to do so; and I could not conceive the existence of misery beyond my power to relieve. When I was

eighteen I was betrothed to my cousin, a young prince, who excelled all others in beauty of person and nobleness of mind, and I fancied myself at the summit of happiness. It chanced, however, that on the morning of my nuptials I went to walk in a garden near the palace, where I had been accustomed to spend some hours daily from my childhood The old gardener, with whose cheerfulness I had often been amused, met me Seeing him look very miserable, I asked him what was the matter? He evaded a direct answer, but I insisted upon his disclosing the cause of his grief, declaring at the same time my determination to remove it

"'' You cannot relieve me,' said the old man, with a deep sigh, 'it is out of your power, my beloved princess, to heal the wound of which I am dying'

"' My pride was roused, and I exclaimed, 'I swear—'

"'' Do not swear!' said the gardener, seizing my hand.

"'' I do swear,' I repeated, (irritated by the opposition) 'I will stop at nothing to make you happy, and I further swear, that I will not

leave this spot until you reveal the *grief* which preys upon you'

"'The old man, seeing my resolution, spake with tremulous emotion as follows: 'Princess, you know not what you have done. Behold a man who has dared for these two years to look upon you with an eye of admiration, his love has at length reached such a pitch, that without you he must be wretched for ever, and unless you consent to meet him in the garden to-night, and become his bride instead of that of the prince, he must die.'

"'Shocked by this unforeseen declaration, and trembling at the thought of my oath, I tried to reason with the old gardener, and offered him all the wealth I possessed 'I told you,' he replied, 'beautiful princess, that you could not make me happy. I endeavoured to prevent your rash vow, and nothing but that should have drawn from me the secret of my heart Death, I know, is my fate, for I cannot live and see you the wife of another Leave me to die. Go to your husband, go to the enjoyment of your pomp and riches, but never again pretend to the exercise of a power which depends upon a

thousand circumstances that no human being can regulate or control.'

"'This speech conveyed a bitter reproach. I would have sacrificed my life a hundred times, sooner than stain my honour by marrying this man; but I had made a vow in the face of Heaven, and to break it seemed sacrilege Besides, I earnestly wished to die undeceived in my favourite notion, that I could make all who came near me happy Under the struggle of these different feelings, I told the gardener his desire should be granted, and that I would be in the garden an hour before midnight. After this assurance I went away, resolved in my own mind not to outlive the disgrace to which I had doomed myself.

"'I passed the day in the deepest melancholy. A little before midnight I contrived to dismiss my attendants, and, arrayed in my bridal apparel, which was covered with the richest jewels, I went towards the garden I had not proceeded many yards, when I was met by a thief, who, seizing me, said, 'Let me strip you, madam, of these unneccessary ornaments: if you make the least noise, instant death awaits you.' In my state of mind such threats frightened me

little. I wished to die, but I wished, before died, to fulfil my vow I told my story to th thief, beseeching him to let me pass, and pledg ing my word to return, that he might not b disappointed of his booty. After some hesita tion, he allowed me to proceed.

"'I had not gone many steps, when I en countered a furious lion, which had broken loos from my father's menagerie Knowing the mer ciful nature of this animal towards the weak an defenceless, I dropped on my knees, repeate my story, and assured him, if he would let m fulfil my vow, I would come back to him a ready to be destroyed as he could be to mak me his prey. The lion stepped aside, and went into the garden.

"'I found the old gardener all impatience fo my arrival. He flew to meet me, exclaiming was an angel I told him I was resigned to m engagement, but had not long to live. H started, and asked what I meant. I gave hir an account of my meeting with the thief an the lion. 'Wretch that I am!' cried the gar dener; 'how much misery have I caused! bu bad as I am, I am not worse than a thief, or beast of prey, which I should be, did I not ab

solve you from your vow, and assure you the only way in which you can now make me happy, is by forgiving my wicked presumption.'

"'I was completely relieved by these words, and granted the forgiveness desired, but having determined, in spite of the gardener's remonstrances, to keep my promises to the thief and the lion, I refused to accept his protection. On leaving the garden, the lion met me. 'Noble lion,' I said, 'I am come, as I promised you.' I then related to him how the gardener had absolved me from my vow, and I expressed a hope that the king of beasts would not belie his renown for generosity. The lion again stepped aside, and I proceeded to the thief, who was still standing where I left him. I told him I was now in his power, but that, before he stripped me, I must relate to him what had happened since our last meeting. Having heard me, he turned away, saying, 'I am not meaner than a poor gardener, nor more cruel than a hungry lion. I will not injure what they have respected.'

"'Delighted with my escapes, I returned to my father's palace, where I was united to my cousin, with whom I lived happily till his

death; persuaded, however, that the power of human beings to do good is very limited, and that when they leave the narrow path marked out for them by their Maker, they not only lose their object, but often wander far into error and guilt, by attempting more than it is possible to perform'

"The princess paused, and was glad to see her guests so enchanted with her story that it had banished every other thought from their minds. After a few moments she turned to one of them, and asked, 'Now which, think you, showed the greatest virtue in his forbearance—the gardener, the thief, or the lion?'

"'The gardener assuredly,' was his answer, 'to abandon so lovely a prize, when so nearly his own.'

"'And what is your opinion?' said the princess to his neighbour.

"'I think the lion was the most generous,' he replied: 'he must have been very hungry, and in such a state it was great forbearance to abstain from devouring so delicate a morsel.'

"'You both seem to me quite wrong,' said the third, impatiently; 'the thief had by far the most merit. Gracious Heavens! to have

within his grasp such wealth, and to refrain from taking it! I could not have believed it possible, unless the princess herself had assured us of the fact.'

"The princess now, assuming an air of dignity, said to the first who spoke, 'You, I perceive, are an admirer of the ladies,' to the second, 'You are an epicure,' and then turning to the third, who was already pale with fright, 'You, my friend, have the emerald in your possession You have betrayed yourself, and nothing but an immediate confession can save your life.'

"The guilty man's countenance removed all doubt, and when the princess renewed her assurances of safety, he threw himself at her feet, acknowledged his offence, and gave her the emerald, which he carried concealed about him. The princess rose, went to her husband, and said, 'There, Ahmed, what do you think of the success of my calculations?' She then related the whole circumstance, and bade him carry the jewel to her father, adding, 'I trust he will feel a greater admiration than ever for my husband, the wonderful astrologer!'

"Ahmed took the emerald in silent asto-

nishment, and went with it to the king, of whom he requested a private audience. On its being granted, he presented the emerald. The king, dazzled by its brilliancy and size, loaded his son-in-law with the most extravagant praises, extolling him as superior to any astrologer who had ever been seen in the world. Poor Ahmed, conscious how little he deserved such praise, threw himself at the king's feet, and begged that he might be allowed to speak the truth, as he was readier to die than to continue imposing on his majesty's goodness. 'You impose on me!' said the king, 'that is impossible Did you not recover my treasure? Have you not brought me this emerald?'

"'True, O king!' said Ahmed, 'I have done so, but without possessing that science for which I have gained a reputation.' He then told his history from first to last with perfect sincerity. The king showed great displeasure while listening to his earlier adventures, but when Ahmed related the story of the emerald, intermingling his tale with fervent expressions of admiration for the wonderful wisdom and virtue of the princess, he heard him with delight. After he had finished, the

king summoned his vizier and chief counsellors, and desired that his daughter also might attend, and when they were all assembled, he spake as follows: 'Daughter, I have learnt the history of thy husband from his own lips. I have also heard much in confirmation of the belief I have long entertained, that thy knowledge and goodness are even greater than thy beauty. They prove that thou wert born to rule, and I only obey the will of Heaven, and consult the happiness of my people, when I resign my power into thy hands, being resolved to seek that repose which my declining years require. As to thy husband, thou wilt dispose of him as it pleases thee His birth, I always knew, was low, but I thought that his wisdom and learning raised him to a level with the highest rank, these, it now appears, he does not possess. If thou deemest his alliance a disgrace, divorce him. If, on the other hand, thou art willing to keep him as thy husband, do so, and give him such share as thou thinkest fit in the authority which I now commit to thee.'

"The princess knelt to kiss her father's hand, and answered, 'May my father's life and reign be prolonged for his daughter's hap-

piness, and for that of his subjects! I am a weak woman, altogether unequal to the task which his too fond love would impose on me. If my humble counsel is listened to, my father will continue to govern his people, whose gratitude and veneration will make obedience light, and rule easy. As to Ahmed, I love and esteem him; he is sensible, sincere, and pious, and I deem myself fortunate in having for my husband a man so peculiarly favoured and protected by Heaven. What, my dear father, are high rank or brilliant talents without religion and virtue? They are as plants which bear gaudy blossoms, but yield no fruit.'

"The king was delighted with his daughter's wisdom and affection. 'Your advice, he said, 'my beloved daughter, shall be followed. I will continue to govern my kingdom, while you and Ahmed shall assist me with your counsels'

"The good cobbler was soon afterwards nominated vizier; and the same virtue and piety, which had obtained him respect in the humblest sphere of life, caused him to be loved and esteemed in the high station to which he was elevated.

"The designs of Sittâra were discovered, but her guilt was pardoned. She was left with a mere subsistence, a prey to disappointment; for she continued to the last to sigh for that splendour she had seen displayed by the chief astrologer's wife at the Hemmâm; thereby affording a salutary lesson to those who admit envy into their bosoms, and endeavour to attain their ends by unreasonable and unjustifiable means."

CHAPTER XXI

MARAGA—NASER-OOD-DEEN—PERSIAN SERVANTS—JAGHATTY RIVER—KURDISTAN—ROBBERY—ARRIVAL AT SENNAH—ARDELAN—CONCLUSION

MARAGA, where we halted some days, is a beautiful town, famous in eastern history as the place where Hoolakoo, the grandson of Chenghiz, relaxed from his warlike toils, and assembled round him men of the first genius of the age, who have commemorated his love of science, and given him more fame as its munificent patron than he acquired by all his conquests. Amongst these was Naser-ood-Deen, who, in the thirteenth century, formed his celebrated astronomical tables.

We approached our encampment by a range of low hills, the top of which had been levelled to aid Naser-ood-Deen, and other astronomers, in making their observations. We traced distinctly the foundations of the observatory, which had been constructed for the favourite

philosopher of the Tartar prince In this observatory there was, according to one of the best Mahomedan works*, a species of apparatus to represent the celestial sphere, with the signs of the zodiac, the conjunctions, transits, and revolutions of the heavenly bodies Through a perforation in the dome, the rays of the sun were admitted, so as to strike upon certain lines on the pavement in a way to indicate, in degrees and minutes, the altitude and declination of that luminary during every season, and to mark the time and hour of the day throughout the year It was further supplied with a map of the terrestrial globe, in all its climates or zones, exhibiting the several regions of the habitable world, as well as a general outline of the ocean, with the numerous islands contained in its

* The writer of the Hubeeb-ul-Syur is the authority quoted by Major Price, from whose history of the Mahomedans this account is taken According to this work, an extraordinary difference was found in the sun's altitude and declination, at corresponding periods, between what was exhibited in the tables now framed by Naser-ood-Deen, and in those formerly established, and an error of surprising magnitude was detected in the mode that had hitherto been observed for adjusting the commencement of the new year

bosom; and, according to the Mahomedan author, all these were so perspicuously arranged and delineated, as at once to remove, by the clearest demonstration, every doubt from the mind of the student!

After contemplating for some time what remained of a work, which had been dedicated to celestial objects, amidst scenes of rapine and bloodshed, we were reminded that we had terrestrial occupations to attend to, being called to breakfast at our tents. These were pitched on the green banks of the river that flows past Mârâgâ, and over which are two admirable bridges of six elliptical arches each, built by the present governor, Ahmed Khan, a nobleman of high rank and influence.

On approaching the tents, we were met by fishermen with some trout carried on willow branches, which were passed through their gills, exactly in the same manner as is customary in Scotland. Those of our mission, and amongst them the Elchee, who belonged to that country, loudly expressed their delight with the willows, the fish, and the clear stream from which they were taken. We had the trout fried for breakfast; and during that meal, Persia, its kings,

princes, astronomers, armies—all were forgotten, and nothing was talked of but the Esk, the Ewis, the Liddle, and the Teviot, important rivers no doubt to the natives of Eskdale, Ewisdale, Liddisdale, and Teviotdale, but probably as little known to many of my English readers, as to the inhabitants of Aderbejan

I visited a small tomb whilst at Mârâgâ, in which, according to common report, the remains of Hoolakoo are interred, as also those of his Christian queen Delghooz Khâtoon. To this lady, even Mahomedan writers ascribe some of the most munificent actions of her Moghul lord, who was attached to her in a very extraordinary degree. She is reputed to have been a great proficient in science, and to have honoured with her peculiar patronage and favour the celebrated Naser-ood-Deen, of whom I have already spoken. The reputation of this great man had nearly proved his ruin. A young chief, of a gloomy disposition, belonging to the dreaded sect of Hoosein, who dwelt in the north-western mountains of Persia, having heard of his fame, and thinking to profit by his wisdom, commanded that he should be brought to his presence. The mandate was instantly obeyed; for his followers

gave a devoted obedience to their chief, being fanatics of the same sect * as the subjects of the Old Man of the Mountain, whose history is familiar to all readers of the wars of the crusades.

A few men were sent in disguise to Bokhara, and Naser-ood-Deen was seized and carried off while walking in his garden. He was made over from one party to another, till he found himself at the "Eagle's Nest" so the residence of the young prince, on the top of a high mountain, was called His value, we are told, was fully appreciated at this barbarous court While, however, they honoured him with every attention, they took precautions to prevent all possibility of escape. It was during this confinement that he wrote the celebrated treatise on ethics †, which has raised his fame as high for philosophy as for astronomy

The desire of liberating a genius of whom his country was justly proud, was, we are told, one

* The first who established this sect in Persia was Hoosein Subah His followers hold the same tenets as those of Ismael in Egypt —Vid Hist Pers vol i p 395

† This treatise is called the Akhlak-e-Nâsiree, and is deemed one of the most valuable works which the Mahomedans possess on moral philosophy

of the principal motives which led Hoolakoo to attack and destroy this abode of dreaded assassins *, and when their boasted Eagle's Nest was taken, the emperor rejoiced less in its capture, than in having released Naser-ood-Deen, who was immediately invested with a dress of honour, and promoted to high employment. But it was to the favour and patronage of the Christian princess Delghooz Khâtoon, that this philosopher owed the opportunities he enjoyed at Mâragâ, of making his name coeval with that of oriental science

No less than five of my friends, who had been long absent on their travels, joined us at Mârâgâ Four of them I could hardly recognise, being dressed in Persian clothes, and having large whiskers and long beards They told us wondrous tales of Seestan, Balochistan, Hamadan, and other countries in which they had been We were now a party of fourteen, but we did not remain long together some were detached to drill Persian soldiers, while others were sent to survey and report upon the

* The English word assassin is said to be derived from the term Hooseinee, by which this sect was known

soil and population of different districts of this once famous kingdom.

The Elchee had returned from his first mission by the route of Hamadan he now determined to go to Bagdad by that of Kûrdistan, the ancient Carduchia, a province to which the sword and the pen of Xenophon have given celebrity I was delighted at the prospect of visiting this country, which I found, by a Persian History * belonging to the Elchee, had a particular claim to the attention of the Christian world It was the birth-place of the famous Saladin †, whose sword arrested the progress of the conquerors of Palestine

According to my author, Shadi Ben Mirvan, a native of Kûrdistan, was kutwal or magistrate of Tekreet ‡ In this office he was succeeded by his eldest son, Nizâm-ood-Deen Ayoob, who was compelled to leave the country in consequence of his younger brother, Assad-ood-Deen,

* This work is called Tarikh Akrâd, or the History of the Kûrds It was given to the Elchee by the Kûrd chief of Mohezzee

† The Mahomedan name of this hero is Sallah-ood-Deen

‡ This fort was taken from the Turks by Timoor, after a memorable siege Vide Hist Pers vol i p 465

having, in defence of an injured female, killed a man of a powerful family. The governor of the province is said to have admired the spirit and humanity which prompted this deed, but being unable to protect the brothers against the relations of the deceased, he recommended and aided their flight. They went first to Moosul *, and thence to Balbec, the prince of which, Noor-ood-Deen, was an intimate ally of Azad Ismael, the Waly of Egypt, who was then warring, according to the Mahomedan writer, against the accursed infidels of Europe! Noor-ood-Deen, pleased with the bold, manly character of Assad-ood-Deen, sent him in command of his forces to Egypt, where, our Eastern author tells us he rose so high in the favour of the Waly, that he employed him to put to death his vizier, and rewarded him with the vacant office! He died soon after †, and his high station devolved upon his nephew Saladin, son of Nizâm-ood-Deen Ayoob

The young Saladin is described by this author in glowing colours His qualities were of the

* The ancient Nineveh

† Assad-ood-Deen's death took place in the year of the Hegira 564

highest order, even in youth he soon outstript all competitors He became the sole manager of affairs in Egypt under the title of Mallik Nasser he wrote to the prince of Balbec to permit his father to join him, and on the twenty-fourth day of Rejib, in the year of the Hegira 565, the old man, who a few years before had considered himself and his family ruined, on being compelled to abandon the office of a petty magistrate, was met and welcomed at some distance from his son's palace by the Waly of Egypt, for that prince thought he could not too highly honour the parent of the man, to whom he ascribed the safety and glory of his country

Saladin wished to make over his station to his father, but the latter declined the offer, and continued, during the three years he lived, without any public employment. The Waly of Egypt having died, Saladin, already in possession of the power, succeeded to the name of sovereign of that kingdom The riches of which he became possessed are minutely described by the Persian author. Amongst them was a staff of emeralds of extraordinary value, and a library of one hundred thousand select volumes

Noor-ood-Deen, the prince of Balbec, who had raised this family, becoming jealous of Saladin's power, endeavoured to destroy him, but all his efforts were defeated, and at his death Syria was added to Egypt

Thus originated the power of the celebrated Saladin His recovery of Jerusalem, the siege of Ascalon, and his wars with those who are termed infidels, are given at great length, and the boldest of the Christian heroes are often represented as flying before his victorious sword I looked through this volume, for an account of the wonderful achievements of our gallant Richard, and some mention of his fair sister Matilda, but I looked in vain, and the omission produced no favourable impression of an author, who could pass over subjects so dear to every English reader of the wars of Palestine

The day before we left Marâgâ, our muleteers mutinied. They refused to proceed through Kûrdistan, alleging that the inhabitants were all robbers and murderers, and delighted in nothing more than plundering and putting to death Persians, from whom most of the tribes of that rugged country differ as much in habits as in religion, being half savages and of the sect of

Soonees The Elchee was only able to quiet them by promising to replace any mules which might be stolen, and to defend them if attacked.

The temper of the Elchee, which had been ruffled by this occurrence, was still more so by the conduct of one of his principal servants, Feridoon Beg, who, besides receiving handsome pay, bore a gold stick, and took precedence of all the state servants on occasions of ceremony. This man having been sent with two hundred piastres to the servants of the chief of Mârâgâ, kept back twenty Being detected, his only defence was, that the fellows had cheated him and others, by intercepting part of a present from their master to the domestics of the Elchee.

The excuse was not admitted Feridoon was degraded, and being a favourite had little sympathy One of his companions, approving of the indignation his conduct had excited, said, "What a mean rascal! to behave as he has done, and all for twenty piastres!" This speech increased the Elchee's passion, who reprobated the man for looking at the amount of the sum taken, not at the immorality of the action. "You, no doubt," said he, "when you begin, will be a rogue on a large scale." He proceeded in his

anger from individuals to communities, and finished by declaring, that there was neither truth nor honesty to be found in Persia.

This was so much the general impression, that we were delighted to find the Elchee's eyes at length opened, but in the evening, when some of us expressed concurrence in his opinions, what was our surprise to find that these had been completely changed by a few hours of reflection!

"I was," he said, "very unreasonable this morning, and am quite ashamed of myself What could you expect?" said he to a gentleman who had mentioned some instances of being cheated in the purchase of horses and mules, as well as by servants, "what, I ask, could you expect to happen to an envoy from Persia, who landed at Hull, with the reputation of having plenty of money, and proceeded to the court of St. James's, furnishing himself and suite with horses, bought without experience, and hiring a numerous train of servants, with little if any inquiry as to their character? Do you think our laws would secure his being supplied in Yorkshire with horses worth what he gave for them, or prevent his being cheated and robbed,

by men who hang loose on society, and who consequently would crowd to such a master?

"Now what is our situation in Persia? We fit out a mission at Abusheher, buy such horses as are offered, and hire every good-looking fellow who presents himself We are in fact compelled to do so, for in a country where religious prejudices are so strong, none but those who cannot get bread elsewhere would come to serve Faringees, unless tempted by the hopes of great gain, through fair or unfair means.

"This, if you reflect, must be particularly the case in a country where laws have little force, but where, whatever of morality there is in the lower orders, chiefly depends upon their religious sentiments, or feelings of allegiance and attachment to superiors, and amongst equals, on the ties which subsist in families and tribes. Their religious prejudices are all against us, and we neither have, nor can have, any claim on their allegiance or attachment, nor the benefit of family ties to guard us in our occasional visits to this country, and we should not therefore wonder that we are sometimes cheated, far less should we proceed, as I did this morning, to condemn a whole nation, be-

cause we discover such crimes in those around us. We ought, in justice to the Persians, to refer much of what has occurred to our peculiar situation in their country, and not write them all down rogues, unless we ascertain that they are, as a people, in the habit of behaving towards each other, as we have found a few of them behave towards us"

Such was the Elchee's doctrine, to which there neither was any expression of assent or dissent Some probably believed there was reason in what he stated, while others thought there was no use in arguing with him on a subject, on which he was known to be very prejudiced and impatient

Two more marches brought us to the banks of the river Jaghattee, which rising among the mountains of Kûrdistan, after fertilizing several valleys in that country, and in the province of Aderbejan, flows into the lake of Oormeah. We halted here some days, and were so delighted with the fishing, shooting, and hunting, near our encampment, that we should have remained longer, but for a report that the plague was in a neighbouring village. This determined the Elchee to move, nor could he be induced

to remain by the assurance of some Kûrds, that this village was the utmost limit to which the scourge had ever been known to extend in this quarter.

It would fill a volume, were I to relate the amusing and interesting accounts we received from our enterprising friends, who had not only visited many of the least known parts of Persia, but had penetrated into the wide and barbarous countries between that kingdom and India. Their travels, if ever noticed, must belong to a future work, none of them excited my curiosity more than those of a gallant and valued friend, who has since died the death of a soldier He had traversed the arid plains of Seestan, and visited the famous cities of Mushed and Yezd in Khorassan As he knew Yezd was the chief residence of the few Guebres, or worshippers of fire, who still remain in Persia, and who live there, under the protection of their chief, who is one of the principal magistrates of the town, he had furnished himself with letters from the Parsees or Guebres at Bombay, to their friends at Yezd Among these was one from Khoosroo, a well known poet, who, like many others, is more famous for the quantity,

than the quality, of his rhymes. My friend had kept a copy of this singular production, which was in verse

After informing the chief to whom this letter was addressed that the person who would present it was endowed with many qualities, Khoosroo terms him the Vakeel or agent of the Elchee, whom he describes as a man "who * never took rest for one moment, in one place." This characteristic hit made us all laugh The Elchee, while he joined in our mirth, defended himself against this charge of perpetual motion as well as he could. "Laugh away, gentlemen," said he, "but recollect one thing—I have never changed my abode, but by the orders of my superiors"

We went from the banks of the Jaghattee to a village called Koozlee. Ascending to the top of a hill, we had a fine view of Kûrdistan, which appeared, far as the eye could reach, an interminable cluster of hills A few scattered huts, and several small encampments, were all we could see of human dwellings, and their

* "Kih yek dem na geered be-jahee kerar."

distance from each other indicated that stage of civilization which precedes the congregating of men into villages and towns

The impressions this prospect made upon our minds, as to the character of the people on whose rugged land we were now entering, were confirmed the ensuing morning at three o'clock, by the cry of "Robbers, robbers! Murder, murder!" All was instantly in confusion, trumpets sounded, drums beat to arms, boots destined for the right leg were put on the left, while we huddled on our clothes, and ran to our posts. It was too dark to see ten yards, but we soon discovered that there were no assailants in the camp Many of our party who had gone in front came back, and every one had a more alarming tale than the other. According to them, several men were killed, and a hundred mules plundered. While listening to these accounts, a Portugueze servant came galloping into camp, exclaiming, "They are murdering all the Christians!—May the Lord preserve us!" The pious ejaculations of the affrighted Joseph caused much merriment; for, as he was the only Christian who had been in

danger, it was evident that his alarm, whatever character he desired to give it, was all for himself.

The Elchee halted till day-light, and then proceeded towards the village; where he found his Mehmandar, two Kûrdish chiefs, and three or four principal men of the country, consulting what was to be done. They entreated him to allow them to trace the robbers, and recover what had been plundered, which was now found to amount to five mule-loads, but circumstances led to a suspicion that some of those who gave this advice were concerned in the robbery, and the Elchee was consequently in no temper to listen to their counsel He told them not to speak to him, as he neither wanted their advice nor aid, being resolved to deter the natives of Kûrdistan from ever again meddling with an European envoy They endeavoured, but in vain, to pacify him, he ordered the infantry and baggage to proceed to the next stage, twelve miles distant, and with the cavalry, divided into three parties, swept the country for eight miles, in the direction in which the mules had been carried off. Three mules and some of the plundered articles were found, and as a security for

the remainder, nine head persons of hamlets and petty tribes were seized, and taken to our encampment. The Mehmandar and some Kûrdish chiefs entreated for their release, and crowds of women and children followed us imploring mercy, but all received the same answer; "When every article which has been taken is restored, or what cannot be found is paid for, then, and not a moment before, shall these men be released"

The Elchee either was or pretended to be in a great rage. The Mehmandar, who was a favourite, and used to joke with him, became alarmed: "I now see," said he, "what I had before heard, but could not believe, that you Faringees, when in a passion, are as great savages as we are, or even as the Kûrds"

When we reached our encampment, the hostages were placed in strict confinement, and not allowed to communicate with any of their families or tribes. The consequence was what we anticipated The lost mules and the greater part of the baggage were brought back. Nothing remained unaccounted for, but some clothes belonging to the Elchee and his personal servants. These were valued at seven hundred

and twenty piastres, which, seeing no abatement would be allowed, were at last paid by the collector* of the district. Some hours after the Elchee sent for this officer, and returned him three hundred and twenty piastres, the amount of his personal loss. This unexpected consideration put the collector in good humour. The prisoners, who had been alarmed for their lives, were not only released but feasted, and the Elchee made small, but valued, presents of coloured handkerchiefs, knives, and scissors, to several of their wives and children, who had followed them to our camp. In short, a gloomy morning was succeeded by a sunshiny evening, and our Kûrd friends left us, declaring they would never again plunder any of our tribe, a promise they will probably keep or break, according as they think they can measure strength with those of our race who may visit their country

The Elchee having become not only calm, but in high spirits with his success, was visited by the Mehmandar and others, who assured him the news of these transactions would soon spread,

* Zabiteh

and protect his camp against all further attempts of plunderers; and certain it is, we were never again assailed during our residence in Kûrdistan.

Our march for several days was over a very rugged country, in which there was little cultivation. The pasture appeared excellent, and the valleys were watered by small but clear streams. The great want in Kûrdistan, as in many other parts of Persia, is wood.—My Indian friend, Soobadar* Syed Hoosein, when riding with me, remarked the great difference in this particular between the provinces we had travelled through, and his native land. "These proud Persians," said he, "boast of their country, but they have neither shade to protect them from the heat of summer, nor fuel to save them from the cold of winter"

The day he made this observation, the good Soobadar had reason to complain of the want of the latter article, for, as winter was yet distant, it being only the 16th of August, none was furnished, and the cold proved excessive, the water

* Soobadar is the highest rank a native can attain in the Indian army This gallant soldier is now soobadar major of the body guard of the governor of Madras

in our tents was frozen, and Fahrenheit's thermometer stood at 34° at six in the morning.

As we approached Sennah, the capital of the province of Ardelan, the soil improved, and, if cultivated, would, no doubt, produce abundance of grain, but its rude inhabitants prefer a pastoral life. They are, if we may judge from what we saw, an uncommonly robust race, and appear unchanged in their manners and customs by the twenty-three centuries which have elapsed since the days of Xenophon, who would have no difficulty, if permitted to return from the Elysian fields, to recognise the descendants of the enemies he encountered amidst these wilds. I made this observation to Baharâm Meerzâ, who had been sent by the Waly of Sennah to welcome the Elchee, and remarked, at the same time, the little care or knowledge they had about religion, though all professed that of Mahomed "It is all very true," he said, "but two or three days will bring you to Sennah, and you will then see that though we are Kûrds, and have a pride in being so, we are not all barbarians."

The evening before we went to Sennah, I read the introductory pages of the history of the Kûrds It is written by a native, and,

according to this patriotic author, all the virtue and courage this world has ever known was nurtured amid the wilds and mountains of Kûrdistan. Its inhabitants, he affirms, attained great glory in former ages, and would have subjected the universe, but for the caution of the prophet Mahomed, who, struck by the fierce look and gigantic form of a Kûrd ambassador, prayed to God that this formidable race might never be united This prayer was heard, adds my author, and the warriors of Kûrdistan have ever since been at variance with each other

Sennah is so surrounded by hills that the town is not seen till you are close to the suburbs. We were pleased with its appearance the houses are well built, and the gardens and cultivation in its vicinity came in strong and pleasing contrast with the rugged lands through which we had travelled for the last eight days

Two sons of Aman ollâh Khan, the Waly, or prince, came with three hundred horse to meet, and welcome us to the court of their father. I was delighted with the eldest of these boys. Though only ten years of age, he rode and managed a very spirited charger with great address.

In his conversation he was free and unembarrassed, mixing the simplicity of the child with the information of the man. He had, he said, been in all parts of his father's territories, and appeared well acquainted with the various tribes by which they were inhabited, answering every question put to him by the Elchee on this subject with remarkable clearness and correctness.

The day after our arrival, we went to visit the Waly, who received us in a magnificent style We found him attended by his principal officers, and the two boys, who had come to meet us, were standing close to their father. The Elchee wished them to be seated, but that, he was informed, was against the etiquette of this petty court That etiquette however was disturbed A man came into the room, and spoke to the Waly in the Kûrdish dialect The prince laughed, and on the Elchee asking what was the matter—"Nothing," said he, "except that a spoilt child of mine, not four years of age, declares he will put himself to death, unless allowed to see you as well as his brothers" The Elchee entreated he might make his appearance, saying he was fond of children, and much flattered by the boy's anxiety to see him Soon

after, in marched this desperate little Kûrd, loaded with fine clothes. He was tolerably bold at first, but took alarm when pressed by the Elchee to sit near him, he appeared particularly startled by the cocked hat and high feather The Elchee, observing this, took out the feather and gave it him to play with. This act of conciliation was completely successful After amusing himself with the feather for some time, the little fellow ventured to take up the hat, examined it, and other parts of our dress, and in a few minutes began to chatter in a manner which delighted the father, who seemed much pleased with the attention paid to his favourite

The Waly having returned the Elchee's visit, and invited us to dine with him, we went to his palace, a small but handsome building. The hall in which we were received was forty feet long, twenty-four broad, and thirty high A facing of white marble covered the walls of this apartment to the height of eight feet, above that it was painted and richly gilt The chequered gilding of the roof had an appearance like mosaic, which produced a good effect. Adjoining to this hall, and one step more elevated, was a room twenty-four feet by eighteen, connected with the

interior of the palace by folding-doors, so admirably finished, and the gilding of which so exactly corresponded with the other ornaments of the apartment, that when shut it was difficult to discover them The front of the hall was supported by four richly carved and gilt pillars, and opened on a terrace commanding a view of the town. On this terrace was a fountain, adapted to its size and that of the building

Persia is famous for its carpets, but none I had ever seen surpassed in beauty that on which the Waly and his guests were seated in this hall of his fathers He appeared to have great pride in introducing the Elchee to the persons by whom he was surrounded None of them, he said, counted less than eight or nine generations in the service of his family, and some had been its firm and attached adherents during a period of four centuries

"My country," he concluded, "is above two hundred miles in length, and nearly as much in breadth. We owe and pay allegiance to the kings of Persia, but we are exempted from that severity of rule which often ruins our neighbours, who possess rich plains and wealthy cities. Ardelan presents little temptation to an invader.

It abounds in nothing," he added, smiling, "but brave men and hardy horses."

The Waly was pleased to find we had, from perusing the history of Kûrdistan, become acquainted with all the great families of that country, and were familiar with the names and actions of some of the most renowned of his ancestors. He had a copy of the same history, but it wanted some passages which were in that of the Elchee, which he borrowed to have them transcribed. The Elchee was pleased, when his volume was returned, to find an addition, which brought up the history of the Walies of Ardelan to the present date, with a most flattering and highly-coloured account of the arrival of the British mission at Sennah, an event which the author, in a truly eastern style, predicted would henceforward be deemed an epoch in the annals of that principality

The town of Sennah, which lies in N. lat. 35° 12′, enjoys a fine climate, the small valley in which it is situated being protected from the severity of the winters in this elevated country, by the hills around it The prince and his chiefs live in great luxury, and the inhabitants have all the appearance of enjoying competence, if not

affluence. Among them were forty families of Nestorian Christians, the heads of which, with their pastor, visited the Elchee. There were many of the same sect, the good priest informed us, in Kûrdistan, who had resided there ever since its separation from the Greek church, a period of thirteen centuries. As for himself and his little flock, he added, they had a small church at Sennah, and were, as their fathers had been, not only tolerated, but protected by the princes of Ardelan This may in part be ascribed to their being industrious and useful citizens, as they are almost all either artizans or manufacturers

From subsequent conversations which the Elchee had with the Waly, it appeared that though the kings of Persia had never attempted to establish their own authority over Ardelan, or to interfere with its internal administration, they have often disturbed its quiet, by fomenting discord in the family of its ruler, and more than once have obtained a temporary influence and power, by aiding a discontented or revolted prince to overthrow the direct line of succession.

The contrast between the inhabitants of Sen-

nah and of the neighbouring hills is singularly striking. The first are little different in their habits from citizens in Persia, while the latter are even more rude than the wandering tribes of that country. You meet them, watching their flocks of sheep and herds of cattle, within five or six miles of the small but luxurious capital, and are surprised to find that it is with pity, not envy, they regard its inhabitants They glory in the state and splendour of the prince and chiefs to whom they owe hereditary allegiance, but look with contempt on the unwarlike, but more civilized community, with whom those they obey are immediately surrounded.

Hamadan, the ancient Ecbatana, Kerman Shah, once the residence of the mighty Khoosroo, Bagdad and its caliphs, the renowned port of Balsorah, and the southern shores of the Persian Gulf, are all before me. But here these volumes must close. My efforts to amuse, and perhaps inform my readers, are interrupted by circumstances, which, though they forbid promise, warrant a hope, that if we are pleased with each other we may meet again

FINIS